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HB1293

March 19, 2025

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1293 – Baltimore City - Office of the Sheriff - Neighborhood Services Unit

POSITION: Letter of Concern

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **has concerns with** House Bill (HB) 1293.

HB 1293 would establish a Neighborhood Services Unit within the Office of the Sheriff of Baltimore City and require the Neighborhood Services Unit and the Board of License Commissioners of Baltimore City to work in partnership to enforce the alcoholic beverages laws of Baltimore City and establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to carry out those duties.

The Baltimore City Administration has concerns with HB1293 as the legislation does not describe or establish required staffing levels for the new Unit nor does it prescribe an intended revenue source for its funding. Currently the Liquor Board has a staff of 10 Inspectors (1 Chief Inspector and 9 Inspector I & II positions). Using this staffing level as a guide for this new team, the estimated cost of this legislation would be \$1.1 million annually. This cost estimate assumes the team will have 10 positions (1 Sergeant and 9 Deputy Sheriff positions) and the overhead support costs for these positions.

In Fiscal 2024 the Sheriff's Office ended the year with a \$4.6 million deficit driven by overtime costs and unbudgeted purchasing activity. For Fiscal 2025, the Sheriff's Office is currently \$1.7m over budget. Creating a new team within the Office will require additional General Fund resources from the City. In Fiscal 2026 the City is currently projecting a \$106 million shortfall. Funding this initiative would require additional service level cuts elsewhere in the City's budget and would need to be funded in perpetuity.

Revenue from the surcharge described in Courts & Judicial Proceedings §7-301(c)(3)(ii) generates approximately \$2.9 million annually which is remitted to the Department of Finance for the current uses of enhancing sheriff benefits and increasing sheriff personnel to enhance the service of domestic violence orders. While the intent of the Sheriff's Office is to establish the Unit by

expanding the authorized uses of this revenue source, there is not an existing surplus to allocate to this new purpose. The annual budget for the Sheriff's Office in FY25 was \$26.4m with the above noted revenue accounting for approximately 11% of the total budget. Given that the revenue generated by the surcharge established by Courts & Judicial Proceedings §7-301(c)(3)(ii) is already accounted for in the annual budget for the Sheriff's Office, allocating it for a new program would increase the City's existing shortfall for FY26 and each year thereafter.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests **consideration of the above concerns** regarding HB 1293.