

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs. I am a resident of MD District 42B. I am **testifying in support of Senate Bill 786, if it is amended.**



Senate Bill 786 would return control of the Baltimore City Police Department to Baltimore City, ensuring local elected officials can directly govern its operations.

The fact that Baltimore City, which is over 60% Black, does not have control of its own police department is a significant mechanism of racial oppression. At a time when we have seen tremendous growth in the movement of Black people who are seeking greater community control over policing, the residents of Baltimore do not have the power to enact the changes they want to see—even though taxpayers are paying hundreds of millions of dollars for the BPD’s operation every year (including payouts for settlements brought against the BPD for improper conduct committed against Baltimore residents). Baltimore residents must travel to Annapolis to negotiate with legislators they didn’t elect, a greater proportion of whom are white.

Year after year, we have seen Baltimore residents take off of work, arrange transportation and childcare, and wait all day in the hallways in order to testify. This is an unreasonably high bar to make one’s voice heard. All too often, Baltimore residents are not heard, and their interests are lost in the hectic pace of the state legislative session, which only runs for a portion of the year. We need to be able to legislate at the local level where there is more direct representation and more time to properly examine the issues.

Because of the importance of this bill and what it would mean for local input into how policing works, it is all the most important that this bill is implemented as soon as possible. Given 2022 is the earliest date a ballot initiative could happen, this means the 2025 date can and should be moved forward to January 1, 2023. Additionally, the spirit of this bill is to give greater community input into policing, so the implementation of this bill should also be done in that spirit. Unfortunately, in its current writing, the Advisory Board does not explicitly include community members. Consequently, Senate Bill 786 must be amended to include community members on the Advisory Board.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 786 with amendments to the bill to ensure it is implemented by 2023 and includes several community members in the Advisory Board.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Martha Schmitz
14 Greentree Drive, Phoenix, MD 21131
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore