

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am a resident of MD District 21 and have lived in Maryland most of my 70 years. I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. 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 it every year. They 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. 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 more 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, as written 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,
Linda K. Girdner, Ph.D.
941 Fall Ridge Way
Gambrills, MD 21054