

SB0237 Public Safety - Law Enforcement Reform -Return the BCPD back to the City

Stance: Support

Testimony: My name is Adiena C. Britt from the 45th Legislative District of Baltimore City. I am writing to offer my support for SB0237 which will move the Baltimore City Police Department from a State Agency, back under City Leadership where it belongs. The history of the BCPD removal from City Leadership is becoming well-known, and I will not supply that here. During the course of 2020, I was engaging with my State representatives, as well as two other City Senators who previously blocked this measure. I was told by one I wasn't his constituent, one never answered, and mine told me that his decision was due to "fiscal" and "TORT" reasoning.

These stances on control of the BCPD are unfounded, as MILLIONS of dollars are paid out of the City coffers in any given year for Police misconduct cases. I believe this is due to City Residents having Civil Cases as their only recourse. There is currently no accountability within the BCPD. I was also told that City leadership should "just change the charter", but the City Charter does not supersede any State Law. The City charter does not offer any type of control over the BCPD outside of hiring a commissioner and deciding the budget. That's all. Changing the City Charter would do NOTHING with their being under State Control at this time, yet are on the hook for millions in settlements. All of this with no say so in how the agency is operated or to enact any types of reforms.

The City Council meets year-round, while the MD General Assembly meets for 90 days per year. Less during the current COVID outbreak. This current set up requires that any reforms, changes, or mandates have to be quickly imagined, written, proposed, and voted on by an ENTIRE state's worth of Legislators for City matters. If the opportunity is missed, another year goes by without any reforms. City residents have no control over what Delegates and Senators from other jurisdictions decide, and when we're being told by city Leaders from other districts that we are Not their constituents, how can we expect folks from outside of the City to listen to us? It is incomprehensible that we only have a 90-day window per year to handle police matters for Baltimore City. No other jurisdiction has such restraints upon it.

Baltimore City Residents have the right to have a say so in our policing, and it should occur within the City Council and Mayor's Office, NOT the MD General Assembly. No other counties have the right to decide whether or not we receive justice, proper policing, nor changes in leadership and the day-to-day operations of our Police Department. As of now, Baltimore City Residents are failing to receive proper responses from their own members of the General Assembly, so why should we expect it from others? City Council and the Mayor have to sit through testimony and hearings on Police Misconduct. The City Solicitor has to decide if and how much civil cases should cost tax payers. Perhaps if the State was on the hook for these things, they would be more than willing to give Baltimore back control of our Police Department. We, as tax payers, shouldn't be on the hook for a State Agency. Maybe that idea can be incentive to vote on SB0237 in such a manner as to give the proper body legislative control over the BCPD, and that is the City Council and Mayor. Please pass this through the committee to the full Senate and House to be enacted into Law.

Thank you.

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