Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 11, 2021

SB 786 –Baltimore City – Control of the Police Department of Baltimore City

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee

My name is **Fernando Chavez** and I live in **Baltimore City**, Maryland. I am testifying **in support of SB 786, with amendments**, to make the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) a City agency. This bill is about racial justice and police accountability and would lead to Baltimore's local elected officials governing the BPD.

As an immigrant, a DACA recipient, and a brown man living in Baltimore City, it is very important to me that Baltimore City has the power to govern the BPD. It is the ONLY way that we as a city and community can hold police officers accountable. It is up to you to make sure this bill passes with amendments. The community is pushing for this, we need this, and we are asking that you pass with amendments.

Since the BPD is currently a state agency, Baltimore's City Council cannot implement policy changes that influence policing; these must instead go through the General Assembly - a body that only meets for 90 days annually and is 30 miles away from Baltimore. SB 786 sets a path for giving Baltimore the same degree of control over its police as other Marylanders.

That said, 2025 is far too long to wait. SB 786 should be amended so that local control would be on the 2022 ballot with an implementation date of January 1, 2023. Further, the make up of the Advisory Board does not explicitly include community members. SB 786 should be amended to include community members.

SB 786 would positively contribute to the reform of policing in Baltimore by working toward restoring local control of the Baltimore City Police Department. **I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 786 with amendments to the bill to shorten the implementation timeline to 2023 and include community members in the Advisory Board.**

Respectfully,
Fernando Chavez