



**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
February 11, 2021**

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

**POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

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

The Maryland Coalition for Justice & Police Accountability (MCJPA) is a large, diverse, statewide coalition of 90+ organizations united to demand [5 police reform demands](#), including returning local control of the Baltimore City Police Department to Baltimore. **MCJPA therefore supports SB 786, with amendments, to make the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) a City agency.** This bill is about racial justice, police accountability, and representative democracy and would lead to Baltimore’s local elected officials governing the BPD. Police abuse and brutality is rampant in Baltimore. As part of the Consent Decree to address unconstitutional policing in Baltimore, the Community Oversight Task Force (COTF) recommendations pointed out that “Every other police force in Maryland is governed and regulated by their local charters. The same should be true for Baltimore City.”<sup>1</sup>

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. City officials and City residents must travel to Annapolis and petition the State for changes to something as fundamental as the number and boundaries of our local police districts. The City and its taxpayers are entirely responsible for funding the BPD’s budget, yet our local government isn’t able to govern the department. “Local governments were established in America to bring government closer to the people it serves...having government operate at the local level, [residents] have more opportunities to engage in the political process and influence public policies that will affect their lives...”<sup>2</sup> The same idea applies to policing. SB 786 sets a path for finally providing Baltimoreans with the same level of police oversight enjoyed by all other Marylanders.

That said, the path SB 786 lays out is far too long. In August of 2018, the COTF said, “control of the BPD [should] be completely returned to the city...with all deliberate speed.” SB 786 asks the people of Baltimore, who have already waited two and a half years, to wait another four years for the potential of establishing local control of the police department in 2025. This is simply unacceptable. **The bill should**

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[https://www.baltimorepolice.org/sites/default/files/General%20Website%20PDFs/0909\\_COTF\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](https://www.baltimorepolice.org/sites/default/files/General%20Website%20PDFs/0909_COTF_Final_Web.pdf)

2

[https://www.baltimorepolice.org/sites/default/files/General%20Website%20PDFs/0909\\_COTF\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](https://www.baltimorepolice.org/sites/default/files/General%20Website%20PDFs/0909_COTF_Final_Web.pdf)

**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, especially members of the Community Oversight Task Force (COTF).**

SB 786 proposes a long overdue change which will positively contribute to the reform of policing in Baltimore - local control of the Baltimore City Police Department. **We 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,

Maryland Coalition for Justice & Police Accountability (members listed below)

Advocates for Children and Youth  
ACLU of Maryland  
ACLU of Maryland, Montgomery County Chapter  
Amnesty International  
Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) Alliance  
Baltimore Action Legal Team  
Baltimore Bern Unit  
Baltimore City Civilian Review Board  
Baltimore for Border Justice  
Be More Unified  
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) - Maryland  
CASA  
Caucus of African-Americans Leaders  
Citizens Policing Project  
Coalition for Justice for Anton Black  
Coalition of Concerned Mothers  
Coalition of People Opposed Violence and Extremism  
Common Cause Maryland  
Community Actively Seeking Transparency (C.A.S.T.)  
Community Justice  
Democratic Socialists of America – Baltimore City  
Democratic Socialists of America – Greater Baltimore  
Democratic Socialists of America – Prince George’s County  
Disability Rights Maryland  
Do the Most Good  
Drug Policy Alliance  
Equality Matters  
For Kathy’s Sake

FreeState Justice  
Greenbelt People Power  
Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association  
Homeless Persons Representation Project  
Innocence Project  
InterFaith Action for Human Rights  
Jews United For Justice  
Job Opportunities Task Force  
Justice Policy Institute  
The JustUs Initiative  
Kevin L. Cooper Foundation  
Law Enforcement Action Partnership  
Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle  
League of Women Voters Maryland  
LGBTQ Dignity Project  
Life After Release  
Making Changes LLC  
Mama Sisterhood of Prince George's County  
March for Our Lives Maryland  
Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy  
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition  
Maryland Defenders Union  
Maryland Justice Project  
Maryland Poor People's Campaign  
Maryland Prisoners' Rights Coalition  
Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative  
Montgomery County Civil Rights Coalition  
Montgomery County Democratic Socialists of America  
Mothers on the Move  
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund  
National Coalition for Drug Legalization  
Nigerian American Lawyers Association - Washington DC Chapter  
Office of the Public Defender  
Organizing Black  
Our Maryland  
Our Prince George's  
Our Revolution Maryland  
Out For Justice  
Planned Parenthood of Maryland  
Power Inside

Prevent Gun Violence Ministry, River  
Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
Prince George's People's Coalition  
Prisons to Professionals  
Progressive Maryland  
Public Justice Center  
Racial Justice NOW!  
Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at University of Maryland-Baltimore  
Reproductive Justice Inside  
Sanctuary DMV  
SEIU 1199  
Showing up for Racial Justice, Annapolis and Anne Arundel County  
Showing Up for Racial Justice, Baltimore  
Showing Up for Racial Justice, Montgomery County  
Sierra Club Maryland Chapter  
Silver Spring Justice Coalition  
Takoma Park Mobilization  
West Wednesdays  
Wicomico County NAACP Branch 7028  
Women's Law Center  
Young People for Progress