

**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 **Darlene Cain** 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.

This means so much to me because I lost my son, Dale Graham on October 28, 2008 to a Baltimore City Police Officer. I never received information on the officer's background or had my day in court. I do not want anyone to suffer as I have for the past 12 years. We cannot sit back and allow an officer to be the judge, jury, and executioner while mothers and families are left voiceless. Even with camera footage there is little liability for the actions of misconduct by the police or for taking someone's life. Instead of attending hearings for police accountability in a court room for wrongful actions, we are planning funerals and burials. If the roles were reversed, families of police officers would want justice for their loved one's life that was taken unjustly. Dale's dreams, like so many others, were stolen. Mothers, fathers, and families are left traumatized; visiting gravesites on birthdays and holidays while violent officers can continue their job and see their families. Dale has two daughters that are now fatherless. Baltimore families live in fear of the police and with no trust, due to the militarization of officers coming into our community. We want to make Baltimore a better place for a better Baltimore. Sadly, our new normal is to mourn with unanswered questions. We demand accountability, starting now.

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.**

Sincerely,

Darlene Cain