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MAYOR

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SB 786

February 11, 2021

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Brandon M. Scott, Mayor, City of Baltimore
RE: SB 786 - Baltimore City - Control of Police Department of Baltimore City

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill SB 786.

Baltimore City is the only jurisdiction in Maryland that does not directly oversee its police department. For nearly a decade of my time serving in City government, I have advocated for transfer of its control to the City. I have also long championed a platform of transforming the City's approach to policing and public safety. This bill represents the culmination of those efforts and serves as a measured and comprehensive path forward for local control of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD).

SB 786 would establish the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) as an agency and instrumentality of the City of Baltimore. Currently the BPD is an agency and instrumentality of the State of Maryland. To guide and oversee this transition, the bill would establish an advisory council of key stakeholders. The advisory council is tasked with studying and reporting out on potential issues related to the transfer of local control and the recommendations for overcoming any potential issues.

To safeguard residents' interests, the transfer of control is contingent on the passage of an amendment to the Charter of Baltimore City and its ratification by the voters of Baltimore City at the 2024 general election. Furthermore, to ensure that there are clear demarcations in control between the State and the City for legal cases, the bill states that BPD will be considered an agency and instrumentality of the State for all actions, omissions, or events

that occur prior to the date of transfer, and will be considered an agency and instrumentality of the City for those same considerations after the transfer.

Transferring control of the BPD to Baltimore City would enable City residents and local elected officials the ability to set policies and provide oversight without advocating for reform through state representatives. It would simply put the City in same posture as comparable jurisdictions in Maryland. The timeline and steps provided in the bill afford the State, BPD, the City government, City delegation members, and necessary stakeholders the time and process for guaranteeing the transfer occurs with forethought and precision. With increasing calls for police transparency and accountability, now more than ever, Baltimore City must regain the authority to oversee its police department.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 786.