



TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 953 – LAW ENFORCEMENT – RACIAL EQUITY AUDITS AND COORDINATORS
Sponsor: Delegate Washington

February 15, 2021

DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Support

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supports House Bill 953, which would require law enforcement agencies in Maryland with budgets exceeding \$50 million annually to conduct an annual racial equity audit related to its practices on hiring, discipline, and use of force. These departments would also be required to hire a racial equity coordinator to promote equity in hiring, discipline, and use of force practices within the department.

Police departments around the country have begun to initiate racial equity audits to ensure that the organization has a firm understanding of existing strengths and weaknesses related to racial equity both within the department and in interactions with the community. Conducting the audit and analyzing the data will enable the department to adopt changes in policy and practice to address any inequitable findings.

House Bill 953 only requires Maryland’s largest law enforcement agencies to thoroughly examine their policies and practices, and to understand the impact of those policies and practices on their officers and employees as well as the community. Of note, the Baltimore Police Department has already hired a racial equity coordinator and is currently implementing an equity plan with a scope broader than that required in the legislation.

Improved public safety and addressing racial equity are key components of the GBC’s *2021 Legislative Priorities*, which outlines a commitment to reviewing all legislative proposals through an equity lens to consider the impacts of proposed legislation on small and minority owned businesses, minority populations, and economically disadvantaged residents.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on House Bill 953.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 66-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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