

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. SURJ is a group of community members supporting local groups working for greater racial justice in Baltimore and the State of Maryland. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of Maryland District 46, and **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 441.**



Senate Bill 441 will authorize Baltimore City's existing Civilian Review Board to function as the local Police Accountability Board required by the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021. The law mandates the creation of these boards to provide a measure of community oversight. Their tasks include: (1) appointing civilian members for the administrative charging committee and internal police trial boards; (2) receiving police misconduct complaints from the public; (3) reviewing disciplinary outcomes from charging committees; (4) holding quarterly meetings with law enforcement agencies; and (5) reporting on disciplinary trends and recommendations to improve police accountability.

The intended functions of the PABs are largely duplicative of those of Baltimore City's existing Civilian Review Board (CRB), which was established by the General Assembly in 1999. It makes little sense to create a new board from scratch that largely mirrors the functions of the existing CRB; the best solution is to harmonize the two laws by making the CRB, with its longstanding expertise and infrastructure, function as the city PAB. Senate Bill 441 seeks to keep existing CRB functions intact and allow it to function as the city PAB, while expanding the board's jurisdiction to include all forms of misconduct (rather than a subset), providing additional opportunities for the CRB to influence internal disciplinary processes, and allocating increased funding to ensure that the CRB has the resources required to effectively take on misconduct cases and to secure independent legal counsel.

Individual episodes of misconduct like the death of Freddie Gray and the Gun Trace Task Force scandal have provoked outrage and calls to action, but police misconduct is a longstanding, ongoing problem. According to an ACLU report released in 2021<sup>1</sup>, the period of 2015 through 2019 saw over 13,000 police misconduct complaints filed against 1,800 officers in Baltimore City. For scale, in late 2017, the total number of patrol officers was just over 800. Unsurprisingly, police violence and misconduct disproportionately impact Black and Brown Baltimoreans and their families, and despite the sheer number of complaints against officers, only a fraction of these complaints are sustained. In addition to these human costs, continued police misconduct represents a direct and significant financial cost to the city; as the period from 2015 through 2020 saw Baltimore spend over \$18 million in settlements related to officer misconduct and harm.

The recently-released final report on the development of the Gun Trace Task Force scandal<sup>2</sup> is notable because it describes not only the genesis of the individual GTTF officers' misconduct, but a pattern of ongoing systemic failure in the Internal Affairs division of the police department that contributed to criminal officers having free reign. As the report summarized in its conclusion, "[A]llegations of misconduct were frequently not taken seriously or investigated promptly. Even when internal investigations proved that officers had engaged in corruption or serious misconduct, substantial punishment was seldom imposed."<sup>3</sup>

These facts show the need for a robust Civilian Review Board, which has the resources and jurisdiction to effectively hold law enforcement accountable to the public. Failure to consolidate oversight power in the CRB would needlessly dilute independent oversight. It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **vote in support of Senate Bill 441.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Lindsay Keipper  
2425 Fleet St.  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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<sup>1</sup> Chasing Justice, available at:

[https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/aclu-md\\_chasingjusticereport\\_aug2021.pdf](https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/aclu-md_chasingjusticereport_aug2021.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Anatomy of the Gun Trace Task Force Scandal, available at:

<https://www.steptoec.com/images/content/2/1/v2/219380/GTTF-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Steptoe report, page 509.