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## **POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**BILL: House Bill 991 -- Baltimore City - Civilian Review Board**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: 3/29/2022**

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender requests that the Committee issue a favorable report House Bill 991.

House Bill 991 is a critical, yet simple, extension and natural outgrowth of the sweeping police reforms enacted last year.

As many of you heard from constituents last year, there is a common belief that police corruption is uniquely problematic in Baltimore. While that is not actually true, police corruption is particularly pervasive in Baltimore.

Last year this Committee was made aware of the GTTF convictions, and this year we have the benefit of the Steptoe Report, an independent study commissioned by Baltimore City and the Baltimore Police Department to examine the roots of corruption. The Study concludes that corruption runs deep in the Baltimore Police Department, has for decades, and the Department's Internal Affairs division is systemically incapable of adequately addressing the misconduct of its own officers.<sup>1</sup>

The Civilian Review Board has existed in Baltimore for years and has given community members a way to express concerns and sound necessary alarms. This bill aims to combine the longstanding efforts of the CRB with the new powers of the police accountability board so there

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<sup>1</sup> A brief powerpoint outlining information from the Steptoe report has been submitted with this written testimony.

is no redundancy, and the needs of the citizens of Baltimore will continue to be addressed by the CRB. Without this bill, the good will and the important history of the CRB will likely disappear. Specifically, this bill will broaden the categories of investigations the CRB can undertake, to parallel the Police Accountability Boards, and it will continue to confer subpoena power to the CRB, which already exists by statute. This combination is necessary to provide Baltimore with much needed independent oversight for intense and pervasive police corruption.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report, with an amendment on House Bill 991.**

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**Submitted by: Government Relations Division of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender.**

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