



MARYLAND COALITION FOR JUSTICE & POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

March 1, 2022

TESTIMONY ON HB 991- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Baltimore City - Civilian Review Board

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Maryland Coalition for Justice & Police Accountability

The **Maryland Coalition for Justice & Police Accountability (MCJPA)** is a large, diverse, statewide coalition of 100+ organizations united to demand impactful police reform and we offer this testimony in **support of HB 991, Baltimore City - Civilian Review Board.**

HB 991 would clarify what the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 (HB 670) did not; if each jurisdiction is required to establish a Police Accountability Board (PAB), how does that body relate to Baltimore City's Civilian Review Board (established by the General Assembly in 1999)?

Delegate Stephanie Smith and Senator Jill Carter introduced HB 991/SB 441 to answer this question while also increasing police oversight and accountability in Baltimore, which is so desperately needed. The legislation would combine the powers of the existing Civilian Review Board (CRB) and those granted to Police Accountability Boards. The CRB has been hampered in providing robust oversight of Baltimore City Police by restrictions on the types of misconduct they can investigate, inadequate financial resources, and the conflict of interest inherent in their legal counsel also representing the Baltimore City Police Department. The Police Accountability Board on the other hand would lack the independent investigative authority and subpoena power that the CRB has, but can investigate all police misconduct. HB 991/SB 441 would also strengthen the CRB by providing robust funding for the body to operate with independence, including independent legal counsel.

It is wasteful to create another civilian oversight entity when the Civilian Review Board has been in place for over 20 years and has infrastructure to build on. The recently released [Gun Trace Task Force Report](#) makes abundantly clear how the endemic lack of oversight and accountability in the Baltimore City Police Department is what enabled (and continues to enable) gross misconduct of police officers. Instead of operating two, duplicative, and weak police oversight mechanisms, the General Assembly should pass HB 991/SB 441 and create an independent and strong police oversight entity for a police department so clearly in need of it.

We therefore urge a favorable report on HB 991/SB 441.