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SB 285

February 14, 2023

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 285 – County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct

POSITION: Letter of Information

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) is providing a letter of information for Senate Bill 285.

SB 285 provides the opportunity for local jurisdictions to bestow investigatory power to their Police Accountability Boards (PABs), furthering civilian oversight for allegations of law enforcement misconduct. Expanded investigatory powers for the PABs is an important component of robust oversight throughout the State, but the enabling legislation must provide flexibility to account for the makeup of each jurisdiction's Board and their respective resources.

The PAB for Baltimore City is comprised of 17 civilian members and has received over 400 complaints of police misconduct since July 1, 2022. On track to collect 700 complaints annually, the City would find the process of authorizing and reviewing investigations logistically unfeasible with the number of members and time required to properly accomplish this task. Adding language to allow for local jurisdictions like Baltimore City to provide investigatory authority to a subset of the PAB, instead of the entire entity, would allow for a more manageable implementation of this legislation.

Additionally, the City PAB is currently staffed by the same agency tasked with supporting the Civilian Review Board (CRB), the only independent body currently authorized to investigate law enforcement in Baltimore City. As the Office of Equity & Civil Rights (OECR) is already supporting two parallel police accountability structures, providing investigatory power to the PAB without abrogating the CRB at the state level would result in a drain of resources by requiring duplicate investigations by the same office.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully submits a **letter of information** on SB 285. This bill furthers the efforts of accountability and transparency in policing, but there are additional considerations needed for individual jurisdictions such as Baltimore City in order to ensure implementation is effective and efficient.