

My name is Allison Evans and I am a resident of District 23, in Bowie. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB758/HB853 - Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner.

After working as a mechanical engineer for a decade, I still grind my teeth a little when someone says the word "oversight." Many engineers do. The first thing that comes to mind is that someone is going to come into our cozy lab, touch all over the equipment, ask a bunch of questions, and disturb our pleasant notions of everything chugging along smoothly. In short, it means confrontation. Discomfort. We grumble. Quality Assurance walks in the door. We stop grumbling, pull out our documentation and drawings, and brush the dust bunnies under a table. We're being Evaluated, and that comes with important things like permission to proceed and additional funding.

The truth of it is, despite our grumbling, we need Quality Assurance, and wouldn't be able to function without their outside input and checks on our power to proceed as usual. An outside perspective is proven to be able to catch what we miss through being immersed in our own culture and designs. They catch mistakes, safety hazards, and potential problems before they get bad enough to cost a lot of money or injure someone. In some cases they literally save lives through their observations and ability to stop our work and demand changes before moving forward. For this, we grumble but recognize it as necessary. The customer relies on Quality Assurance to get the end product they ordered. We rely on them to keep us aware of ourselves and our processes.

I ask you to look at the Baltimore Police Department as delivering an essential service to the end customer, the residents of Baltimore City. City Council, therefore, acts as Quality Assurance for the BPD. An outside perspective searching for mistakes, safety hazards, and potential problems that could, worst case, result in loss of life.

In 2021 the General Assembly passed legislation that reestablished BPD as a city agency, provided that Baltimore residents ratified an amendment to the City Charter. In November 2022 that happened with overwhelming support. Out of residents who voted on the topic, over 82% voted to ratify it. Baltimore residents wanted this change. They recognized the need for this change, as the end customers of the BPD. The Maryland General Assembly was able to deliver on it, yet one snag remains.

As a result of the 2021 and '22 legislation, BPD is a City agency, but one sentence in existing law prevents City Council from legislating much-needed reforms to their Police department: a provision in the Baltimore City Charter that states ". . . no ordinance of the City or act of any municipal officer . . . shall conflict, impede, obstruct, hinder or interfere with the powers of the Police Commissioner."

Because of this wording, unlike officials in other localities, Baltimore City Councilmembers have been unable to reform BPD policy through local regulations or ordinances. Instead, City officials and residents are forced to take local matters to the State's Capital once a year during a three

month window to plead for changes. This is highly inefficient and is merely due to vestigial wording from a provision made in the 1860's. No other locality in Maryland has limited control over its own police department. None but Baltimore City.

Imagine, now, if a mechanical parts manufacturer wrote into their contracts "no act of any Quality Assurance...shall conflict, impede, obstruct, hinder, or interfere with the powers of the Engineers." Wouldn't that render QA completely useless in it's magnificent ability to ensure a good end product and safe manufacturing? Yes, it would! Baltimore City is missing an essential function of its City Council that is present in ALL other localities. It is hindering the ability of the BPD to reach its full potential in serving the residents of Baltimore City. They need Quality Assurance now, not later.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB758/HB853 to immediately restore local control of the BPD to Baltimore City.