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Tracie Guy-Decker
Baltimore, MD 21229

TESTIMONY ON SB758 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Tracie Guy-Decker

I am a resident of District 4I. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB758, Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner.

I live, work, worship, and educate my kid at a public school in Baltimore City. I, and my family, choose to live in the City. We are Baltimore residents because we want to be.

Like many Baltimoreans, I am disheartened by the fact that the name of our city, along with Ferguson and Minneapolis, has become shorthand for discussing problems with contemporary policing. I don't claim to know all the answers to addressing that reality. I expect no single person does. I do feel certain that delaying local control of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) is NOT a step in changing the narrative.

Five years ago, the consent-decree-mandated Community Oversight Task Force wrote in their report, "the BPD will never be fully accountable to its residents until full control of the department is returned to the city." They stressed the importance of the City Council having legislative power, and recommended that this change happen "with all deliberate speed." That call for speed was sounded in 2018. It is all the more urgent now.

You already know the facts and the numbers—the General Assembly's own action last year to return control to the city, the support of the change by an overwhelming majority (82%) of Baltimore City voters (including this one).

I'll spare you additional numbers, and simply share this: I will feel safer and more at ease when I know that my council member and his colleagues—men and women who are in and of Baltimore and who are accountable to me and my neighbors—have some control over the force that is charged with protecting and serving us.

At the moment, especially with the partial completion of the transition, it feels unclear exactly who holds the reins. In other words, who has legislative authority over BPD right now? At a February 21, 2023 hearing at Baltimore City Hall, the [city's law department seemed to think it](#)

[was no one](#). And if we aren't sure who holds the reins, how can I and other city residents be sure they're accountable to us, the people of Baltimore?

It's time and more than time for local control of BPD. The will of the people of Baltimore and the recommendations of the Community Oversight Task Force couldn't be clearer. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB758.