

Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am a member of D46 and a city resident, **writing in support of SB758.**

For more than a decade, advocates have been working to give City Council legislative oversight of the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD). In 2021, the General Assembly passed legislation to reestablish BPD as a City agency, so long as Baltimore residents ratified an amendment to the City Charter. In November 2022, Baltimore residents did exactly that, overwhelmingly voting in favor (82%!) to make the BPD a City agency once more. I personally canvassed hundreds of my neighbors in support of that amendment on October 30<sup>th</sup>. As a result, as of January 1, 2023, Baltimore City's police department is a City agency, but City Council is still powerless to legislate much-needed reforms to the BPD.

The General Assembly must make one more change in the City Charter to enable local control, and it must be enacted immediately. Further delay is unacceptable, as it unjustly limits representative democracy and police accountability in a majority-Black city. We still don't have local control - the General Assembly has to pass [SB758/HB853](#) to remove one line in the City Charter which prohibits the City Council from infringing on the power of the Police Commissioner.

The federal consent decree mandated the formation of a [Civilian Oversight Task Force](#) to make recommendations to strengthen police accountability and police-community relations. In their 2018 report they said that, "The BPD will never be fully accountable to its residents until full control of the department is returned to the city." They stress the importance of the City Council having legislative power and recommend that this change happen "with all deliberate speed."

Mayor Scott and Del. Young are advocating for a delay (to Oct. 1, 2024!) in their bill, [HB975](#), but more than that, they are advocating for the consideration and implementation of a new structure altogether, which could likely diminish or eliminate the possibility for City Council to have a say over BPD policy. Baltimoreans do not need to wait to lift the Charter restriction.

Delay is unacceptable. We cannot and will not wait any longer. The people's will, clearly expressed in the last election, must be carried out immediately by passing SB758/HB853, which will restore legislative authority to our City Council on June 1, 2023.

For those reasons, **I urge a favorable report on SB758.**

Thank you,

John Ford

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