



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB 975 with Amendments

Honorable Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am honored to present testimony in support of House Bill 975, which seeks to clarify the extent of local control over the powers of the Baltimore City Police Commissioner. As a sponsor of this legislation, I believe it is a crucial step towards a safer and more equitable city.

The transfer of control of the Baltimore Police Department to Baltimore City was a landmark moment in our city's history. The intent of this transfer was to vest the Mayor and City Council with the ability to effect policy changes that better serve our community. However, recent statements made by a representative of the City Law Department have called into question the scope of local control over the police department. To be clear, it is my belief that the City currently has local control albeit narrower than originally sought. It is my understanding that both myself and Senator Carter are seeking advice from the Attorney General to get clarity on where things are under the law in light of these developments.

Notwithstanding this, amendments to HB 975 are being submitted to provide clarification and specificity to the extent of local control. These amendments will:

1. Remove the reporting requirement, as it has been nearly completed and is no longer necessary. Additionally, I prefer not to advance this bill as an emergency measure.
2. Advance the effective date to June 1, in response to requests from advocates.
3. Refine the language of the bill to ensure the autonomy of the police commissioner in carrying out day-to-day operational decisions.

By making these changes, HB 975 will provide Baltimore City with the necessary clarity and control to make meaningful changes to the Baltimore Police Department, while preserving the autonomy of the police commissioner.

In 2018, I first began my career legal advocacy at the ACLU of Maryland, this was my first assignment. I have worked on it ever since. Today we stand closer to the finish line than ever. It is time that we come together, end conflict, and pass this legislation so we can move on to more pressing matters. We are all on the same page – that the Council has this power, and that said power is within the scope that we all intended. Let's move forward in good faith.

I respectfully request your support for HB 975 with these amendments.