

# Town of Bladensburg

## Council Members

### Ward I

Trina Brown  
Jocelyn Route



Mayor  
Takisha James

## Council Members

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Marilyn Blount  
Carrol McBryde

February 21, 2023

Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger  
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building, Room, 101  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Takisha James and I serve as Mayor for the Town of Bladensburg. I first want to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 518, Police Accountability Boards and Administrative Charging Committees – Municipal Corporations sponsored by Delegates Lopez, Kaufman, Mireku-North, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Queen, Rogers, Ruth, Stewart and Vogel.

The Town of Bladensburg is fortunate to have our own police department comprised of 25 sworn officers. Like many similar-sized communities, our residents strongly benefit from the swift responsiveness by our municipal police department for emergency and non-emergency situations. We are able to respond to calls immediately with an average response time of 2-3 minutes on average. We are also able to develop positive and strong relationships with our residents, business owners, neighborhood schools and other community partners. We are giving credit when our officers do great work and by the same token as the municipality must take responsibility when the actions of our officers are called into question and are not consistent with established general orders, laws and our high employee expectations.

Your support of HB 518 will allow us to continue to provide timely responses in situations where there are complaints against officers by enabling municipalities such as Bladensburg to establish our own Police Accountability Boards and Administrative Charging Committees.

The current law raises major concerns. One of which is the lack of precedence for Maryland counties having oversight of municipal employees. It is unusual to place this additional burden on counties which are currently significantly understaffed and under-resourced. As an example, Prince George's County has 27 municipalities. In addition to having the responsibility for adjudicating their own cases that stem from county police-related incidents, it would be an overwhelming and overly burdensome task to expect the County to handle all cases from 27 municipalities in a timely fashion. Additionally, this would delay justice for families of victims as well as innocent police officers who are awaiting the adjudication process due to backlogs of cases at the County level.

Providing the option for municipalities to establish their own police accountability boards and administrative charging committee will also ensure the diversity, gender and cultural representation of the community is reflected in the members of the membership. This is essential in ensuring that justice is served as members of the Police Accountability Boards and Administrative Boards carry out their important work.

For these reasons, I ask for your support of HB 518.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Takisha D. James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Takisha D. James  
Mayor, Town of Bladensburg