

HB0853-Baltimore City - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner

Stance: Favorable with Amendment

Testimony: My name is Adiena Britt and I reside within the 45th Legislative District of Baltimore City. I am writing in order to support HB0853. I have been working on the Local Control of BPD issue since 2018 and have stuck with it through every obstacle and hindrance that has been thrown at it by some City Delegates and Senators. I am tired of having to address this issue, and this “mistake” in not addressing the Legislative coverage over the Police Commissioner and BPD having been “missed” in the 2021 Legislation is mind-boggling. I have had to testify via video, via written testimony, and in person at the City Council and using this means in Annapolis. I’m tired of having to testify, and follow this issue.

With the Legislation that passed in 2021, Local Control was forced to become a ballot initiative in order to change the City Charter. It also forced an “Advisory Board” to be established, and we were cool with that; even though it managed to kick the can down the road a year. I was a staunch advocate of “Question H”, even hand-making signs for people’s lawns to vote for it. It passed with 82% of the vote, and we thought we had accomplished something. Only come to find out that this vital portion of the Law was “missed” in 2021. I found this out via an in-person City Council meeting on February 21st of this year! What it amounts to is that NO ONE in the State of MD has Legislative Power over the BPD right now! Not only that, but there’s been no Legislative Oversight since January 1st of 2022!!!! So, they’ve gone OVER a YEAR without any governance! This is Unacceptable!

Though this Bill was written to serve as a corrective action, I would be remiss if I didn’t state that an effective date of June 1st, 2023 is unacceptable as well! This should take effect IMMEDIATELY! As soon as it passes, because if it passes in this session and the effective date remains June 1, then the BPD will have gone a YEAR AND A HALF with no Legislative Oversight!! How can that be? How could the MD General Assembly have allowed that to happen? Unless it was purposely done. Enough is enough on this issue.

The Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City need to have this Legislative Authority provided and enacted AS SOON AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE. The Advisory Board is confident that they will have a final report as early as the first week of April. They’ve also supplied reports to Annapolis in December of 2021 AND December of 2022. The Delegates and Senators in the MD General Assembly need to cease and desist delaying the inevitable any longer. Pass this Legislation with the Amendment that it takes effect Immediately so that the City Government can do what constituents have sent them to do, which is Legislate over a City Agency.

The BPD has been improperly governed since the 1860s, and have proven themselves to be above the law time and time again. Citizens of Baltimore City who have been the victims of Police Brutality have had enough! Get this done and get Legislative Power placed into the right hands and at the right time. The Right Time is NOW!

Thank You.