

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Gretchen Tome, and I am a resident of the 45th District. **I am testifying in support of HB 853 to Amend Baltimore City's Charter for Local Control of Police.** I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with our accountability partner, the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs (CJSJ).

In 2021, the General Assembly passed legislation to reestablish BPD as a City agency provided that Baltimore residents ratify an amendment to the City Charter. In November 2022, Baltimore residents overwhelmingly voted in favor (82%!) of a charter amendment to transfer control of the BPD from the State to Baltimore City. This win was the result of years of work by community members and advocates. But, as a result, as of January 1, 2023, Baltimore City's police department is a City agency, however City Council is still powerless to legislate much-needed reforms to the BPD.

We still don't have local control - the General Assembly has to pass [SB758/HB853](#) (Sen. Carter/Del. Smith are the sponsors) to remove one line in the City Charter which prohibits the City Council from infringing on the power of the Police Commissioner.

Baltimore City is still the *only* locality in Maryland and only one of two localities in the entire country that does not have control over its own police department. Further delay of implementation of local control of the Baltimore Police Department is unacceptable, as it unjustly limits representative democracy and police accountability in a majority-Black city.

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.

I have volunteered with CJSJ member organizations, including CASA and JUFJ, to do door-to-door canvassing and poll place volunteering on election day. In addition, I'm an active supporter of Tawanda Jones and the West Coalition in the fight for justice for Tyrone West and all victims of police brutality. I care deeply about and have personally invested time and resources into gaining local control of our police department.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **favorably on Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner HB853.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Gretchen M. Tome  
3229 Shannon Dr.  
Baltimore, MD 21213  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore