



**BRANDON M. SCOTT**  
MAYOR

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**HB 481**

February 15, 2023

**TO:** Members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Brandon M. Scott, Mayor, City of Baltimore

**RE:** House Bill 481 - Criminal Law – Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting a Handgun – Penalty

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports for House Bill 481.

HB 481 seeks to increase the maximum penalty of imprisonment for wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun. Public safety and the overall well-being of all Baltimoreans and Marylanders is of the utmost importance for my Administration. House Bill 481 can be another step in the right direction, acting as a deterrent for those individuals who choose to unlawfully carry a handgun in Baltimore and will also increase public safety across the entire state of Maryland.

The current laws regarding the wearing, carrying, or transporting of firearms are important, but they have proven to be insufficient in deterring individuals from engaging in such activities. By increasing the maximum penalty of imprisonment, this bill sends a strong message that these actions will not be tolerated and will be met with severe consequences. I have said many times that consequences for violent crime, especially for those involving guns, must be certain and consistent. Everyone should face the same consequences for possessing illegal firearms. Hopefully the potential for increased sentences will deter individuals from carrying firearms on their person. I also want to be clear that this legislation does not create a new mandatory minimum. This legislation simply gives judges the leeway to impose tougher sentences for misdemeanor firearm possession on offenders 21 years-old or older – a sentence that is already in place for offenders between 18-21.

We must continue to pursue all opportunities available to us to deter the commission of crime while in possession of guns, especially illegal guns. Additionally, we must make sure that penalties are clear and consistent.

For these reasons, I request a **favorable** report on HB 481.