

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

My name is Sarah Johnson, and I am a resident of District 41
in Baltimore City. **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.

It is for these reasons that **I urge you to vote favorably on Baltimore City – Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner HB 853.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sarah Johnson
1 Merryman Court
Baltimore, MD 21210
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore