



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB1034

March 21, 2024

TO: The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of the Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 1034 - Baltimore City Sheriff – Staffing

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1034.

HB 1034, if passed, would allow for the number of appointed assistant sheriffs to increase from one to three assistant sheriffs. These additions would allow for the Sheriff's office to increase and improve their managerial oversight. This bill, as amended in the House, would also allow for the hiring of two social workers. The main purpose of hiring social workers would be to provide additional support and resources to individuals during the eviction process. While it is unfortunate that individuals must go through the process of eviction, these workers will be able to ensure residents will have the resources they need sooner rather than later. For decades, the process of eviction within Baltimore has been excruciating and demoralizing. We believe that the addition of these positions will make for a smoother transition. The BCA has committed millions of dollars to eviction prevention and to ensuring that residents have a right to counsel in eviction proceedings and the addition of these social work positions to the Sheriff's Office staff furthers those efforts.

Currently, the first two changes proposed in HB 1034 are funded through Fiscal Year 2024 and are likely to be funded for Fiscal Year 2025. It is important to note that while the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office is a State agency, it is funded through the budget of Baltimore City in the Ordinance of Estimates. The BCA has been in consistent communication with the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office in regard to their staffing levels and their desire to be able to utilize sources of funding outside of the Baltimore City Ordinance of Estimates to fund positions. The third change in HB 1034 would provide authorization for the Sheriff of Baltimore City to make certain appointments as funding becomes available, regardless of its source, but still within the current laws regarding collective bargaining.

For these reasons, the Baltimore City Administration requests a **favorable** report on HB 1034.