

2024 HB 1034 - Sheriff Bill - Senate JPR (xover) -

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Position: FAV

Baltimore City Sheriff's Office

Samuel Cogen, Sheriff

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Baltimore, Maryland 21202
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TO: The Honorable Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nicholas T.R. Blendy, Esq., Assistant Sheriff, Baltimore City Sheriff's Office

RE: House Bill 1034 – Baltimore City Sheriff - Staffing

DATE: March 21, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office (BCSO) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1034 in its current posture.

HB 1034, if enacted, would effect three (3) changes to the section of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings statute that governs the Baltimore City Sheriff and his office. Two of the changes will fulfill campaign promises that Sheriff Cogen made to the voters if they were to elect him to his current position; those are to increase managerial oversight in the office, and to humanize the evictions process. The third change is to provide hiring flexibility and the opportunity to seek additional funding sources. It is worth noting that this bill has no fiscal impact, as all of the positions being codified are already funded for in the current Fiscal Year 2024 Sheriff's Office budget and have been submitted for in the preliminary Fiscal Year 2025 Sheriff's Office budget proposal.

Regarding the first change, the two additional Assistant Sheriff positions provide managerial expertise in areas that previously have not existed in the BCSO. One of the Assistant Sheriff positions is responsible for oversight of the office's budget management and human resources to ensure personnel matters are handled effectively. The other Assistant Sheriff position serves as internal legal counsel for the office.

The second change to the statute involves codification of the social worker provision in the office. The social workers are critical staff for Sheriff Cogen's commitment to humanizing the evictions process, as they are tasked with connecting resources to tenants facing eviction as early in the process as possible. Since losing one's home is probably the most traumatic experience anyone can have short of losing one's liberty, the ability to intervene and connect a tenant to resources to either help stave off the eviction or to identify resources that can help a family after an eviction is effected is a key component to the BCSO's mission around its legal responsibility to carry out these orders of the Court. After conversations with the Baltimore City Administration (BCA), this provision was amended in the House of Delegates to codify the number of social workers at two (2), which the Sheriff believes is a sufficient number to help make his vision in this area a reality.

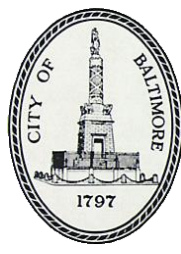
The third change is a funding flexibility change. Because the BCSO is a State agency but is funded through the Mayor and City Council budget, there is sometimes a unique administrative delay in the addition of personnel to the BCSO. This provision is intended to streamline the process to authorize the Sheriff to make appointments when funding becomes available regardless of its source (e.g., grants, direct State aid, etc.). Much like the paragraph above, after conversations with the BCA, this provision was also amended in the House of Delegates to clarify the language to ensure the intent—to provide BCSO appointment flexibility whenever funding is available—is phrased in such a way that is consistent with similar legal language dealing with other areas of the Mayor and City Council budgeting process.

For the foregoing reasons, the BCSO respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 1034.

HB1034-JPR-SUPP.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



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.