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BILL NO.: **HB 597**

TITLE: **Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act**

SPONSOR: **Speaker Jones, By Request of the Administration**

COMMITTEE: **Judiciary**

POSITION: **Support with Amendments**

DATE: **February 6, 2024**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** House Bill 597 – Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act. The program proposed by this legislation provides an avenue for law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical service agencies to enhance their hiring programs through apprenticeships.

The GAPS Act takes meaningful steps to enhance the growth and retention of the public safety workforce. The legislation would strengthen an existing apprenticeship to create a viable pathway to employment with the agency. HB 597 would additionally create a commission to investigate best practices for the hiring and retention of law enforcement, fire, and EMS employees. Furthermore, the GAPS Act would require the creation and implementation of wellness programs to support the needs of public safety employees. The Baltimore County Police Department and Fire Department believe these apprenticeship programs, the proposed commission, and the wellness supports will address hiring shortages and increase diversity and inclusion in the workforce. Baltimore County supports the amendment proposed by the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) to include the Departments of Public Safety and Corrections to the commission created under the bill.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 597 from the House Judiciary Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.