

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by 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 the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs. I am a resident of Maryland District 40 and live in the Medifield neighborhood of Baltimore. **I am testifying in support of House Bill 732.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

I am here today to express my strong support for HB732, which would grant Baltimore City the authority to oversee and govern its own police department.

Unfortunately, under the current system, our police department is managed by the state of Maryland, creating a disconnect between those who enforce the law and those who live under it. Without the authority to oversee and govern our police department, accountability remains elusive. **We demand transparency and accountability from those who enforce the law, and local control is the key to ensuring that our voices are heard and our concerns are addressed.**

Decisions about policing in Baltimore City should be made by those who understand our community's dynamics and are directly **accountable to its residents.**

Local control empowers us to swiftly implement tailored strategies to combat crime, improve community relations, and foster trust in law enforcement. This lack of local control means that critical decisions about policing in our city are being made by people who don't know Baltimore and, quite frankly, don't care about Baltimore. Their decisions are driven by broader state-level considerations rather than the specific needs and concerns of our neighborhoods.

Why should the residents of Baltimore need to travel to Annapolis and lobby lawmakers from across the state in order to impact policy change in their own, locally-funded, police department? As long as the tax dollars of Baltimore citizens are used to pay out police misconduct settlements, the citizens should have direct, local control of their police department.

This legislation represents the final and urgent step towards securing the autonomy necessary for Baltimore City to effectively govern its own police department. It's time to put the power back where it belongs—in the hands of those who know and care about Baltimore. Supporting HB732 is not just about completing a process—it's about reclaiming our voice, our safety, and our future.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of House Bill 732.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Christina L Bell
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore