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HB1034

February 27, 2024

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

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with amendments** 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 would also allow for the hiring of 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 truly believe that this addition 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. The BCA has been in constant 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.

There are two slight amendments that we are working with the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office to finalize which would define the number of social workers the Sheriff's Office may hire as well as clarify the language for the additional positions the Sheriff may hire if additional funding is available.

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