

SB825-JPR-FAV.pdf

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SB 825

February 26, 2025

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of the Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: SB 825 - Baltimore City - Assault of Special Enforcement Officers - Penalties

POSITION: **Support**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that my Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 825.

SB 825 seeks to expand assault protections afforded to law enforcement, parole officers, firefighters, and other first responders to Baltimore City special enforcement officers, parking enforcement officers, and traffic enforcement officers. These enforcement officers are City employees who are empowered by the police commissioner through Public Local Law to perform duties typically carried out by Baltimore City Police Department. By appointing and authorizing these officers to perform these duties, it helps to ensure our Police Department is able to focus on the most serious elements of public safety throughout the City. However, while these officers are being provided the authority to enforce certain laws, they are not provided the same protections as sworn officers of the Baltimore Police Department. Being unarmed and without authority to make arrests, these enforcement officers are particularly vulnerable when conflicts arise.

These three types of enforcement officers perform various duties throughout the City that put them in direct contact with residents who may be in a heightened state of emotion. These officers conduct traffic enforcement for large scale events alongside sworn officers where tens of thousands of individuals are entering or leaving venues; parking enforcement where a vehicle owner may be in disagreement with the enforcement officer regarding the parking violation; animal control where pet owners may become aggressive toward those officers; and other enforcement officers who conduct enforcement for various types of housing violations.

The Baltimore City municipal workforce is comprised largely of people of color. This fact holds true for special officers, parking officers, and traffic officers, the majority of whom are women of color. The assault of these critical workers poses a substantial challenge to recruitment and staff morale, which in turn hurts the level of service the City can provide to residents. Parking officers are particularly prone to confrontation and conflict due to the controversial nature of their work—

no one is happy to receive a parking ticket. Parking officers are required to disengage when disputes arise, but this does not ensure the safety of officers.

Ensuring the safety of our employees is paramount to staff morale and recruitment efforts. Extending protections to these critical enforcement officers will allow Baltimore City to provide residents with higher quality parking and traffic enforcement.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 825.