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MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
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HB0186

February 25, 2025

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

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

RE: House Bill 186 – Police Discipline - Trial Board Composition

POSITION: **Favorable with Amendments**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 836 - Police Discipline - Trial Board Composition **with amendments**.

HB 186 would change the composition of trial boards established under Article – Public Safety, §3–106(b)(1) to require a qualified attorney under the bill rather than an actively serving or retired administrative law judge or a retired judge of the District Court or a circuit court. This qualified attorney must be a U.S. citizen, resident of Maryland for the last five years, a resident of the jurisdiction for the last six months, registered to vote in the state, at least 30 years of age, admitted to practice law in Maryland, and “most distinguished for integrity, wisdom, and sound legal knowledge.” The intent behind this bill is to broaden the pool of potential individuals who are qualified to serve on the trial board to all those who are qualified to serve as a judge in the state of Maryland.

HB 186 should make it easier for county chief executive officers to identify individuals who will fill the role of chair on trial boards tasked with adjudicating matters of police discipline. The BCA supports this effort as any difficulty with trial boards reaching full capacity will only stall the legally mandated and misconduct/complaint review process to the detriment of transparency, accountability, and trust from the public. However, the requirement that an attorney eligible to serve on a trial board under Article – Public Safety, §3–106(c)(7) of the bill may be open to interpretation and, as such, legally challengeable. Because of this, there could be instances in which a law enforcement officer disputes the disciplinary outcome of their trial board hearing based on the attorney appointed as chair not being “most distinguished for integrity, wisdom, and sound legal knowledge.” As such, the BCA recommends removing this line from HB 186.

For the above stated reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable with amendments** committee report on HB 186, believing that the suggested amendments will strengthen the intent behind the legislation.