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**SB 0544**

February 18, 2026

**TO:** Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations  
**RE:** Senate Bill 544 – Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard

**POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **requests consideration of the following information concerning** Senate Bill (SB) 544 – Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard.

SB 544 establishes a minimum level of security for Courthouses in the State of Maryland. There would be a significant fiscal impact to Counties and Baltimore City as they fund the security for Circuit Courts within their jurisdiction. The legislation mandates that there be one Court Security Officer (CSO) for every four or fewer courtrooms on each floor of a courthouse, one CSO for any criminal, family, or juvenile proceeding (to be expanded to any proceeding on July 1, 2028), two CSO's for any proceeding involving an incarcerated individual or an individual who may be remanded to custody. This minimum standard does not include CSO staffing levels for security checkpoints at entrances and exits or in holding areas.

The Baltimore City Administration supports the intent of this legislation to ensure that courtrooms are appropriately secured as well as ensuring that the magistrates and judges have adequate security personnel present for trials. However, if the full fiscal impact of this legislation is to be absorbed by the City of Baltimore, we would need to identify a significant amount of additional funding to be in compliance.

The Baltimore City Department of Finance has identified the following scenarios that would result in a higher financial burden for the City based on the parameters of SB 544. The Department assumes that 88 officers would be required to maintain the minimum level of security outlined in the legislation. Of these, approximately 13 officers would be needed to meet the requirement based on the number of courtrooms per floor, 45 officers would be required for attendance at proceedings, and 30 officers would be needed to satisfy incarceration or remand requirements. Currently, there are 32 budgeted CSO positions; therefore, to comply with the law, the City would need to fund an additional 56 CSO positions.

The BCA has produced three potential scenarios to estimate the cost of implementing SB 544 with a resultant projected cost ranging between \$3 million and nearly \$6 million annually. In the first scenario, each CSO is employed with a \$50,748.10 base salary with \$31,558 in other personnel costs for an annual salary of \$82,306. With 56 CSOs that would cost an additional **\$4.6 million a year.**

In another scenario in which CSOs are paid hourly rather than salaried and are at the higher end of the hourly wage scale, we estimate the cost to be approximately \$5.9 million by assuming that every CSO would be paid at a rate of \$53.83 an hour, amounting to \$430.60 for an 8-hour day, and with 248 working days in a year, an annual salary of \$106,788.80, multiplied across the 56 additional positions is **\$5.9 million a year.**

Lastly, in a scenario in which CSO's all were paid at a lower rate and came to the estimate of \$3 million by assuming that every CSO would be paid at a rate of \$27.54 an hour, \$220.28 for an 8-hour day, and with 248 working days in a year, an annual salary of \$54,630.33, multiplied across the additional 56 positions is **\$3 million a year.**

The BCA is committed to ensuring that there is adequate security provided at all courthouses located within the City of Baltimore and looks forward to additional dialogue concerning how to best address the additional funding required. For the above stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests **consideration of the above concerns** on SB 544.