

**SB 544 - favorable - courtroom security.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kirsten Brown

Position: FAV

**Ivan Bates**  
President



**Kirsten N. Brown**  
Executive Director

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**Date: February 16, 2026**

**Bill Number: SB 544**

**Position: Favorable**

On behalf of the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) and prosecutors throughout Maryland, we write in support of Senate Bill 544, which establishes minimum statewide standards for courthouse and courtroom security.

Prosecutors regularly appear in proceedings involving incarcerated defendants, emotionally charged disputes, and family members of defendants and victims who are not satisfied with the criminal justice system. These settings present heightened safety risks for judges, court staff, victims, witnesses, defendants, and attorneys. Senate Bill 544 appropriately addresses these risks by ensuring consistent, adequate security in all courthouse facilities across the State.

The bill's requirement that court security officers meet the qualifications of special police officers promotes professionalism, accountability, and effective response to courtroom threats. Additionally, the phased-in staffing standards, requiring dedicated security officers in courtrooms, enhanced coverage for high-risk proceedings, and supplemental officers on each courthouse floor, reflect the practical realities faced daily in criminal, family, and juvenile courts.

Adequate courtroom security is essential to the fair and orderly administration of justice. Prosecutors must be able to perform their duties without fear of intimidation or violence, and victims and witnesses must feel safe participating in court proceedings. Senate Bill 544 advances these fundamental goals while providing reasonable implementation timelines.

For these reasons MSAA respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 544.

**SB0544 – MSBA Support Letter (2026.02.16 - Courtro**

Uploaded by: Shaoli Sarkar

Position: FAV



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200 Duke of Gloucester Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Bill:** SB 544 – Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard

**Committee:** Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

**Position:** Favorable

**Date:** February 16, 2026

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The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) **supports** Senate Bill 544 - Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard. Through its advocacy committees and various practice-specific sections, MSBA monitors and takes positions on legislation that protects the legal profession, preserves the integrity of the judicial system, and ensures access to justice for Marylanders.

Court security and access remains a core priority for MSBA. Justice depends on everyone's safety. Judges and attorneys must be able to decide and present cases without concerns for their welfare or for their family. Litigants must be able to come to court and seek justice without fear.

These threats are very real in Maryland and across the country. A 2024 survey of state judges found that over 82% worry about their safety and over 56% have been personally threatened.<sup>i</sup> Nationally, the U.S. Marshals Service reported 176 threats in just the first month of 2026, showing an escalating trend of violence in the judiciary.<sup>ii</sup>

For our members, the courtroom is their office. They should not have to navigate threats and violence in courtrooms or fear walking in and out of parking lots as part of their professional lives. Our members cannot opt-out and choose not to appear in court. They have taken an oath and have a duty to represent their clients in high-conflict situations, making standardized security a necessity.

Last year, we came before you to advocate for minimum courtroom security standards. This bill takes the next necessary step to continue implementing these protections statewide through a phased-in approach. It is essential to create and support a standard that our members and the public need.

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**Marisa A. Trasatti**  
President

**Natasha Dartigue**  
President-Elect

**Randolph S. Sergent**  
Secretary

**Natasha M. Nazareth**  
Treasurer

**Anna S. Sholl**  
Executive Director

We urge the Committee to continue its commitment to court safety and respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 544.

*Contact: Shaoli Sarkar, Advocacy Director (shaoli@msba.org, 410-387-5606)*

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<sup>i</sup> Perceptions and Experiences With Judicial Security Threats: A Survey of U.S. State Court Judges, Court Review (2024). <https://nationalcenterforstatecourts.app.box.com/v/AmJudgesCourtReviewArchive/file/1699377897310>

<sup>ii</sup> Protective Investigations – Threat Statistics, U.S. Marshals Service (through January 30, 2026). <https://www.usmarshals.gov/what-we-do/judicial-security/protective-investigations-threat-statistics>

**2026 SB 544 - JPR (FwA).pdf**

Uploaded by: Sam Cogen

Position: FWA

# Baltimore City Sheriff's Office

Samuel Cogen, Sheriff

Main Office  
The Clarence Mitchell Courthouse  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202  
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Fax: 410-727-3507



District Court Office  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202  
Phone: 410-396-7412  
Fax: 410-396-7439

TO: The Honorable Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nicholas T.R. Blendy, Esq., Assistant Sheriff, Baltimore City Sheriff's Office

RE: Senate Bill 544 – Courtroom Security – Minimum Adequate Security Standard

DATE: February 18, 2026

## POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office (BCSO) **supports with amendment** Senate Bill (SB) 544.

If enacted, SB 544 is an attempt to codify clear, uniform, and minimum adequate security standards for the operations of security personnel in courtrooms and courthouses around the State. In Baltimore City, where its Sheriff is the Chief of Court House Security as designated by State law,<sup>1</sup> the resources devoted to this service are deeply incongruous to those that are required as the number of judges has more than doubled since the responsibility was first given to the Sheriff in 1973. For example, in 1973, there were fifteen (15) judges of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City,<sup>2</sup> whereas there are thirty-five (35) in 2026.<sup>3</sup> In 1973, there were thirty-five (35) funded court security officer (CSO) position in the Sheriff's budget; today, there are thirty-eight (38), even as the number of judges has more than doubled.

SB 544 fundamentally attempts to codify two important concepts. First, it articulates minimum qualifications for training and certification for a CSO—that of a Special Police Officer (SPO). The BCSO supports adopting this standard, which was recommended in the final report of the Task Force to Ensure the Safety of Judicial Facilities in Maryland (Task Force).<sup>4</sup> The BCSO has implemented these

<sup>1</sup> See Md. Code of Pub. Local Laws, Art. 4, §§ 22-6 thru 22-11, et seq.

<sup>2</sup> The Supreme Bench of Baltimore City was reorganized as the Circuit Court of Baltimore City in 1983 after a 1980 amendment to the Maryland Constitution took effect.

<sup>3</sup> See Md. Courts & Jud. Proc. §1-503(b).

<sup>4</sup> See Task Force to Ensure the Safety of Judicial Facilities Report & Recommendations (December 2024), available at: <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/027000/027087/20250181e.pdf>.

standards already and all of its CSOs are either SPO certified through a partnership training course that it has established with Coppin State University, or are slated to attend a future class.

The second part of SB 544 attempts to set minimum adequate personnel staffing standards standard for courtrooms and courthouses at two calendar dates in the future: July 1, 2027 and July 1, 2029. And the minimum staffing standards are consistent with those very thoughtfully contemplated and recommended by the Task Force.<sup>5</sup> Where this part of SB 544 comes up short, however, is in the language on Page 1, Lines 19-21 “...ANY ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING COURTHOUSE SECURITY SHALL USE BEST EFFORTS TO HAVE PRESENT...”, and the same language repeated again on Page 2, Lines 8-10.

While the BCSO strongly supports the minimum qualifications for CSOs and the portions of the bill that articulate the minimum personnel standards per courtroom and court facility, the language identified above is, in its opinion, extremely problematic. In short, it is either not an adequate standard mandate at all, or worse, it is an unfunded one. The BCSO is no stranger to advocating for additional funding at the state and local level for the needs of protecting the Baltimore City Circuit Court facilities. Sheriff Cogen and his staff have testified during the past two (2) local budget cycles about the shortfall in the Court Security Service line item which underfunds the BCSO roughly \$6.5 million.<sup>6</sup> This is the deficit that would need to be closed by July 1, 2029 to achieve the standards set forth in SB 544.

As such, the **BCSO respectfully requests that SB 544 not be passed in its current form** until the committee and stakeholders identify a dedicated funding mechanism through any combination of funding sources that the General Assembly sees fit. Otherwise, this legislation is guaranteed to put the BCSO—just as it will for other Sheriff’s offices—in between false hope and expectations from its local bench of judges and the general public and the strain of its local government—the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore—to identify resources without any mandate upon them to find the money and no assistance from a new source. To expect the local government to find this money within its existing means in the current budgetary constraints borders somewhere between naïve and fanciful, in the opinion of the BCSO.

In closing, the issue of security in judicial facilities is one that should be of paramount importance to everyone committed to a democratic form of government. Throughout the country and in every corner of the State of Maryland, the hardworking personnel that keep the safety of judges, judicial employees, individuals awaiting their trials, jurors, and other members of the general public are doing their work without a minimum and uniform standard to adequately ensure our safety in and around these facilities, and without sufficient resources. SB 544 provides a vehicle to take the next step in providing the security that all Marylanders deserve when they are in these buildings, but it cannot meaningfully accomplish this until the funding mechanism is addressed.

For the foregoing reasons, the BCSO respectfully requests a **favorable with amendment** report on SB 544.

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<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *See* Letter from Baltimore City Assistant Sheriff Nicholas Blendy to Baltimore City Bureau of Budget Management & Research Director Laura Larsen dated June 4, 2025).

**Letter from NB to LL Re City Budget Bill FINAL (6-**

Uploaded by: Sam Cogen

Position: FWA

# Baltimore City Sheriff's Office

Samuel Cogen, Sheriff

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June 4, 2025

Laura Larsen  
*Budget Director*  
Bureau of Budget Management & Research  
Department of Finance  
Mayor & City Council of Baltimore  
100 N. Holliday St  
Baltimore, MD 21202

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL TO [LAURA.LARSEN@BALTIMORECITY.GOV](mailto:LAURA.LARSEN@BALTIMORECITY.GOV)**

Dear Budget Director Larsen:

Our office observed your presentation of the Ordinance of Estimates for Fiscal Year 2026 ("City Budget") to the Board of Estimates and /also reviewed what written materials we could find regarding the Budget and how it proposes to fund the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office (BCSO).

Please accept this letter and related attachments as a formal response from the BCSO to the present posture of the City Budget as it impacts our office.

I. Legal Background:

In Baltimore City just as it is in 23 other counties of Maryland, the Office of the Sheriff is established by the Constitution of Maryland, specifically as part of the Judiciary Department at Article IV, § 44.

Unlike Baltimore City Charter Offices and Departments, the BCSO is an office of the State of Maryland staffed entirely by state employees,<sup>1</sup> and is governed by the Constitution, the common law and regulated by the Laws of Maryland including Public Local Laws as enacted by the Governor and the General Assembly of Maryland, respectively.<sup>2</sup> The Mayor & City Council of Baltimore (the City) has no authority to regulate the operations of the BCSO,<sup>3</sup> but rather is simply mandated by the Laws of

<sup>1</sup> Except for the Sheriff of Baltimore himself, who is a constitutional officer. See Md. Code Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(f)(5).

<sup>2</sup> See 58 *Opinions of the Attorney General* 671, at 673-674 (1973).

<sup>3</sup> In *Rucker v. Harford County*, 316 Md. 275 (1989), the Supreme Court of Maryland observed that it "...has frequently pointed out that the authority, duties and functions of a sheriff are controlled by the common law and the General Assembly.

Maryland to fund the operations of the BCSO, just like all the other 23 counties are mandated to fund the operations of respective sheriff's offices housed within their respective jurisdictions.<sup>4</sup>

In general, the City's obligation to the BCSO in the City Budget each year involves:

- “(a) The sheriff and deputy sheriffs of a county shall:
  - (1) Receive the annual salaries provided by this part for performing the duties required of them by the Constitution and the laws of this State; and
  - (2) Be reimbursed for expenses as provided by law.
- (b) (1) A deputy sheriff shall perform the duties incidental to the office as are assigned by the sheriff.
  - (2) All deputy sheriffs' salaries shall be paid at least once each month.
- (c) The government of each county shall:
  - (1) Furnish an office for the sheriff;
  - (2) Pay the necessary expenses for telephones, stationery, and other purposes; and
  - (3) Unless otherwise provided by law, provide for:
    - (i) The necessary traveling expenses of the sheriff for conveying prisoners to any penal institution in the State; and
    - (ii) Other necessary traveling expenses.”

*Md. Code Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-313.*

Specifically, there are several provisions of state law mandated upon the City that control, which will be cited throughout this letter. Most of the bulk of the specific law governing the obligations of the City to the BCSO are found in two locations: (1) in the general laws within Courts & Judicial Proceedings § 2-316 and (2) in the Public and Local Laws for Baltimore City, located in Subtitle 22 of Article 4 of the Maryland Code of Public and Local Laws.

Before getting into further detail, I note that City funding of the operations of BCSO is not entirely a discretionary choice left up to the Charter elected executive and legislative branch officials, as it is for Charter offices and departments. While the City does have discretion in funding operations above and beyond those operations which the Constitution of Maryland, the common law, and the duly enacted Laws of Maryland are mandates of the BCSO, the City has a minimum obligation required to fund operations necessary for the BCSO to fulfill its constitutional, common law, and statutory mandates, which the City has no authority to abridge.<sup>5</sup>

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Thus, in *Mayor City Council of Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376, 488 (1860) (concurring opinion), Chief Judge Le Grand stated in language that has often been repeated:

[T]he Constitution...does not specify or describe the powers and duties of the sheriff. These are left to the common law and the Acts of Assembly....There is nothing to prohibit the Legislature from adding to or diminishing his duties, provided those added be not in conflict with his office as sheriff.

See e.g., *Soper v. Montgomery County*, 294 Md. 331, 337, 449 A.2d 1158 (1982); *Green v. State*, 122 Md. 288, 294-296, 89 A. 608 (1914); *Beasley v. Ridout*, 94 Md. 641, 656, 52 A. 61 (1902). See also *Crosse v. Board of Elections*, 243 Md. 555, 561, 221 A.2d 431 (1966).” at 286-287.

<sup>4</sup> See Md. Code Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316, specifically, and § 2-313, generally.

<sup>5</sup> “[W]e believe the county has an implied obligation to provide the sheriff, within reasonable limits, with the necessary funds to adequately discharge his constitutional and statutory obligations.” 60 *Op.Atty.Gen.* 647, 657 (1975)

However, the BCSO acknowledges the Sheriff owes an obligation to the City "...to realistically assess the needs of his office and to request only such additional funding for personnel as he deems absolutely necessary for the adequate performance of his functions."<sup>6</sup>

Mindful of the mutual obligations the BCSO and the City owe each other, the BCSO believes it would be helpful to both parties to restructure the manner in which the City Budget currently presents a the "services" of the BCSO into a manner that fits within the legal framework governing our relationship.

#### A. Court House Security Division

Securing the safety of the Circuit Court of Baltimore City and the Juvenile Court Facilities in Baltimore City<sup>7</sup> are an inherent common law<sup>8</sup> and current statutory responsibility of the BCSO.<sup>9</sup>

The General Assembly has structured the BCSO primarily through two areas of code: (1) Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316; and (2) Art. 4 of the PLL §§ 22-6 to 22-11. As such, the BCSO should be conceived of as the former being staffed by the Deputy Sheriffs Division (to include civilian staff),<sup>10</sup> and the latter being the Court House Security Division (also to include civilian staff).<sup>11</sup> Because it is currently the most underfunded need of the office, it is sensible to begin with the Court House Security Division.

The Court House Security Division was created in 1976 when the General Assembly of Maryland created a Division of Court House Security within the Office of the Sheriff.

*"A division of Court House Security is created within the Sheriff's Office of Baltimore City. The Sheriff of Baltimore City is the Chief of Court House Security."*<sup>12</sup>

This Division of Court House Security was a legislative transfer of the Security Bailiffs<sup>13</sup> from the Baltimore Circuit Court Judges control to the Sheriff's Office.

The General Assembly did not recodify the position of the "court-appointed bailiff" as a Sheriff's Deputy but rather created the position of "Court Security Officer" (CSO) and placed it under the appointment authority, control, and direction of the Sheriff. Unlike Sheriff's Deputies, CSOs are only empowered to exercise the limited peace officer authority of what was a Security Bailiff<sup>14</sup> and do not have the broad authority of Deputy Sheriffs.

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> See 57 Md. Op. of the Att. Gen. 614 (1972) at fn. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Md. Code PLL Art. 4 §§ 22-6 to 22-11 et. seq.

<sup>10</sup> See Md. Code Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(f)(3)(i) "The Sheriff's Office shall also have assistants at the compensation provided for in the annual ordinance of estimates of Baltimore City."

<sup>11</sup> See Md. Code PLL Art. 4 § 22-7 "The Sheriff of Baltimore City shall appoint other court security officers and other employees as are necessary, who shall serve at his pleasure." (Emphasis added).

<sup>12</sup> Md. Code PLL Art. 4 §§ 22-6 (enacted Ch. 864 Laws of Maryland of 1976).

<sup>13</sup> I use the term "Security Bailiff" which does not appear in code, because when the General Assembly transferred the responsibility of Court House Security back to the Sheriff in 1976, they retained and retitled the position of "Law-Clerk Bailiff" as a position under the control, authority and appointment power of the Circuit Court itself. See Md. Code PLL Art. 4 §§ 22-26 to 22-11 et. seq. (enacted Ch. 864 Laws of Maryland of 1974).

<sup>14</sup> Md. Code PLL Art. 4 § 22-9.

The Sheriff is empowered to appoint CSOs and staff as necessary to protect the court and judges:

*“The Sheriff of Baltimore City shall appoint other court security officers and other employees as are necessary, who shall serve at his pleasure.”<sup>15</sup>*

Additionally, the City of Baltimore is mandated by the General Assembly to fund the BCSO Court House Security Division.

*“The salaries of personnel of the Court House Security Division together with funds necessary to provide uniforms, equipment, supplies, and general expenses shall be included in the annual operating budget requests of the Sheriff of Baltimore City as provided in the Annual Ordinance of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City.”<sup>16</sup>*

Accordingly, it is clear that the General Assembly created the Court Security Officer position (essentially, a Sheriff’s Security Bailiff) under the public and local law to attend court. Moreover, while judicial threats and the business of Baltimore City Court House and the buildings being utilized as an annex thereto have greatly increased in the past half century, funding has remained flat or possibly even decreased.<sup>17</sup> Yet the expectation of the General Assembly, the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court of Baltimore City, and the Sheriff of Baltimore City is to provide a Court Security Officer from the Sheriff’s Court House Security Division for each Judge and Judicial Magistrate in the Circuit Court and Juvenile Justice Center.

After conducting an honest review of the staffing needs for the Court House Security Division and reviewing the duty of the Sheriff under *PLL* § 22-7 to appoint Court Security Officers as are necessary, for Fiscal Year 2026, and after consultation with the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, the Sheriff would need to appoint 75 Court Security Officers (CSOs), 7.5 CSO Supervisors, one (1) Deputy Chief of Court House Security, one (1) Chief of Court House Security, and some number of “other employees”, all of whom are absolutely necessary to the efficient and effective security operations of the Circuit Court facilities and the annexes thereto. Additionally, for Fiscal Year 2026, the Sheriff would require sufficient funding necessary for the provision of uniforms, equipment, supplies, and general expenses for the operation of the Court House Security Division.

The methodology included in the realistic assessment of the personnel absolutely necessary for adequate functions of the BCSO to run Court House Security for Fiscal Year 2026<sup>18</sup> along with the necessary equipment, supplies and general expenses is set forth in the attached Appendix A. Based on that Appendix, the total true salary costs to operate the Court House Security Division for Fiscal Year 2026, is anticipated to be \$8,869,943.00. When totaling up the amount of salaries funded for the total universe of Court Security Officer PINs in the budget book, that amount is only \$2,352,918.00. This means that

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<sup>15</sup> Md. Code PLL Art. 4 § 22-7.

<sup>16</sup> Md. Code PLL Art. 4 § 22-11.

<sup>17</sup> See Letter from Sheriff Cogen to Chief of Security Sean Wolcuff in Administrative Office of Courts (dated Jan. 7, 2024).

<sup>18</sup> This methodology is **CSO salary costs only** and does not contemplate the cost of CSO Supervisors or the operational supervisory positions of Deputy Chief or Chief of Court House Security, nor any equipment costs, etc.

the true costs of running Court House Security are *budgeted with a personnel salary funding deficit*<sup>19</sup> of *-\$6,517,025.00*. (Emphasis added).

Finally, it is important to note that the work of the Court House Security Division does not go undone because it is unfunded, because the courts operate each and every day they open. What is occurring in the current fiscal year, and what the City Budget funds for the next is work that ends up being backfilled by the Deputy Sheriff Division. This letter explains further, below.

## B. Deputy Sheriff Division

Having dispensed with the realistic assessment of funds necessary to adequately discharge the statutory obligations of Court House Security, the BCSO turns to a similar assessment of the FY-2026 needs of the Deputy Sheriff Division.<sup>20</sup> In defining the constitutional and statutory obligations and functions that the Maryland Constitution and State statutes impose upon the BCSO Deputy Sheriff Division, the interplay between these dual statutory mandates of the General Assembly is important to consider in distinguishing the various responsibilities of the two divisions.<sup>21</sup>

“If the language of the statute is clear and unambiguous and expresses a meaning consistent with the statute’s goals and apparent purpose, our inquiry normally ends with that language. If, on the other hand, the language is susceptible to more than one meaning and is therefore ambiguous, we consider “not only the literal or usual meaning of the words, but their meaning and effect in light of the setting, the objectives and purpose of the enactment,” and, in those circumstances, in seeking to ascertain legislative intent, we consider “the consequences resulting from one meaning rather than another, and adopt that construction which avoids an illogical or unreasonable result, or one which is inconsistent with common sense.” *Tucker v. Fireman’s Fund Ins. Co.*, 308 Md. 69, 75, 517 A.2d 730, 732 (1986); *Board of License Commissioners for Charles County v. Toye*, 354 Md. 116, 123, 729 A.2d 407, 410 (1999).”

*Chesapeake Charter, Inc., et al. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education*, 358 Md. 129, 135 (2000).

In the BCSO’s opinion, it would be illogical, unreasonable, and inconsistent with common sense to presume the General Assembly was simply engaged in mere redundancy when it set up the statutory scheme that separated Court House Security as a separate mandated function from that of the rest of the functions and responsibilities that statutes, common law, and the Maryland constitution have charged the BCSO with performing. Accordingly, the BCSO believes it is reasonable to apply the statutory interpretation canon of *in pari materia*<sup>22</sup> in distinguishing the roles the General Assembly has intended for the

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<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of illustrating the scope of the issue, we focused on salaries only. Obviously, we would anticipate training, equipment and similar hard costs to increase slightly based on each additional personnel.

<sup>20</sup> See fn. 4, *supra*.

<sup>21</sup> The Maryland Supreme Court has “...said so often, in construing a statute, our objective is to ascertain and give effect to the intent of the Legislature.” *Chesapeake Charter, Inc., et al. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education*, 358 Md. 129, 135 (2000).

<sup>22</sup> *In pari materia*, BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 911 (10th ed. 2014) (“[I]n the same matter.”); LATIN WORDS & PHRASES FOR LAWYERS 115 (1980) (“In pari materia: Upon an analogous matter or subject.”); RUSS VERSTEEG, ESSENTIAL LATIN FOR LAWYERS 136 (1990) (“IN PARI MATERIA... ‘In subject matter corresponding in function.’ This canon of statutory construction tells us that statutes should be ‘read together.’ In other words, we should interpret statutes consistently with one another.” (emphasis omitted)); JOHN GRAY, LAWYERS’ LATIN 72 (2002) (“In pari materia ‘in like

two divisions' respective roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, for ease of framing, it's best to think of the Deputy Sheriff Division's role as everything else the BCSO does other than Court House Security.<sup>23</sup> Returning to Md. Code Ann. Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316, the following provisions control the personnel and other funding requirements for the BCSO:

Mandatory Appointed Personnel (State Mandated Sheriff Appointments):<sup>24</sup>

"The Sheriff shall appoint:

- (i) An undersheriff or chief deputy sheriff;
- (ii) Three assistant sheriffs;
- (iii) Three deputy sheriff majors;
- (iv) Three deputy sheriff captains;
- (v) Six deputy sheriff lieutenants;
- (vi) One secretary sheriff; and
- (vii) One fiscal clerk sheriff."

Appointed Sworn/Specific Personnel (Mandated Funding if Deemed Necessary by Sheriff):<sup>25</sup>

"The Sheriff may appoint:

- (i) Up to a maximum of:
  - 1. 9 deputy sheriff sergeants;
  - 2. 103 deputy sheriffs;
  - 3. 2 domestic violence clerks;
  - 4. 2 domestic violence advocates; and
  - 5. 2 social workers;

Appointed Civilian Personnel (Mandated Funding if Deemed Necessary by Sheriff):<sup>26</sup>

"The Sheriff's Office shall also have assistants at the compensation provided for in the annual ordinance of estimates of Baltimore City."

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material or substance', comparable, of equal relevance in an analogous case." (first emphasis omitted)).

<sup>23</sup> I note that the BCSO believes the Deputy Sheriff Division retain a reserve role in the operations of the Court House as a part of the Sheriff's responsibilities. *See* Prince George's County v. Aluisi

"It has never been disputed, in this State, that it was the official duty of the sheriff, to attend in person, or by deputy, the sessions of the law courts of his county and in the City of Baltimore."

It is difficult to see how the work of the courts could be properly and expeditiously conducted in the absence of an officer, clothed with the power and authority of the sheriff."

It was the duty of the sheriff at common law to attend the courts, in person, or by deputy. *Blackstone's Commentaries*, Vol. 1, star page 345, and it has always been regarded as one of the official duties of his office to so attend the sessions of the law courts of the State.

354 Md. 422 (1999) *citing Green v. State*, 122 Md. 288, 295-296 (1914).

<sup>24</sup> Md. Code Ann Ct. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(d)(1).

<sup>25</sup> Md. Code Ann Ct. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(d)(2)(i).

<sup>26</sup> Md. Code Ann Ct. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(f)(3)(i).

**Sheriff and City’s Discretionary Personnel (Sheriff Must Make a Showing of Funding Source):**<sup>27</sup>

- (ii) Subject to subsection (i) of this section, any additional sworn or civilian personnel if the funding for personnel is provided in the ordinance of estimates or any other source.

As for Fiscal Year 2026, the Sheriff has determined the following actions regarding personnel in the Deputy Sheriff Division, which he requests be funded by the City Budget:

- In accordance with the authority under Md. Code Ann Ct. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(d)(2)(i) and its requirement upon him to appoint the following personnel, he formally appoints the following personnel in his budget and whose PINs should be funded:
  - One Chief Deputy Sheriff;
  - Three Assistant Sheriffs;
  - Three Deputy Sheriff Majors;
  - Three Deputy Sheriff Captains;
  - Six Deputy Sheriff Lieutenants;
  - One Secretary Sheriff; and
  - One Fiscal Clerk Sheriff.
  
- In accordance with the authority under Md. Code Ann. Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(d)(2), which authorizes him to appoint, and after realistically assessing the personnel needs of the Deputy Sheriff Division of the office, the Sheriff has determined in order to adequately discharge the constitutional and statutory obligations of the Deputy Sheriff Division, it is absolutely necessary to for him to appoint, and he formally appoints the following personnel in his budget and whose PINs should be funded by the City Budget:
  - 9 deputy sheriff sergeants;
  - 103 deputy sheriffs;
  - 2 domestic violence clerks;
  - 2 domestic violence advocates; and
  - 2 social workers.
  
- In accordance with the authority under Md. Code Ann. Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(f)(3)(i), which authorizes him to appoint, and after he has realistically assessed the personnel needs of the Deputy Sheriff Division of the office, the Sheriff has determined in order to adequately discharge the constitutional and statutory obligations of the Deputy Sheriff Division, it is absolutely necessary to for him to appoint, and he formally appoints the following personnel in his budget and whose PINs should be funded by the City Budget:
  - The current City Budget bill flat funds the civilian positions, and the Sheriff is in the process of making an honest assessment of the needs of the office and, at present, has no objections to the current salary funding levels.
  
- In accordance with the authority under Md. Code Ann. Cts. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(f)(3)(ii), the Sheriff addresses the following needs of his office, pursuant to his authority to have “...provisions made in the [O]rdinance [of Estimates] for the expenses of the Sheriff’s Office, including the purchase and maintenance of motor vehicles.”:

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<sup>27</sup> Md. Code Ann Ct. & Jud. Proc. § 2-316(d)(2)(ii).

- The current City Budget bill contains provisions for fleet, training, supplies, and equipment and the Sheriff continues making an honest assessment of the needs of the office and, at present, has no objections to the current funding levels.
- In accordance with the authority under Md. Code Ann. Cts. & Jud. Proc. §§ 2-316(f)(3)(ii), 2-316(i)(4)(i)6., 2-316(i)(4)(iii), 2-316(i)(4)(iv), and 2-316(i)(4)(xii) the Sheriff addresses the following needs of his office, pursuant to his authority to determine the services to be rendered, operations to be performed, the technology to be used, and the overall methods, processes, means, and classes of work or personnel by which governmental operations are conducted, including the technology needs and internal security practices:
  - The Sheriff is reiterating his authority to procure and contract information technology equipment and services that he determines best serves the mission of the BCSO and he reiterates that the current services with Baltimore City Office of Information Technology (BCIT) do not meet the needs of BCSO. He will continue to collaborate with all parties to complete the separation of the relationship in a manner that is amicable and protects the interests of both parties.
  - On July 1, 2025, the statutory mandate that the BCSO have operational body-worn cameras goes into effect.<sup>28</sup> The BCSO is pleased to report that it is fully compliant with this mandate, but notes that it is difficult to determine whether the City Budget contains any funding for the expected recurring costs of storage, review, auditing, compliance with requests for information, referrals to appropriate staff for any disciplinary review, and similar related tasks. Based on the costs incurred by other law enforcement agencies who are already mandated by the same statute<sup>29</sup> and in conversations with peer law enforcement agencies, the BCSO anticipates that it will need additional resources commensurate with similarly sized law enforcement agencies. The BCSO looks forward to continuing conversations with the Mayor and City Council as it conducts an honest assessment of its body-worn camera program, moving forward.

The BCSO closes this section of the letter by reiterating that without an adequately funded Court House Security Division that covers the true costs of providing that service, the deficit of -\$6,517,025.00 in costs will be covered by backfilling the work that should be done by CSOs by using Deputy Sheriffs.

To analogize to another public safety service provided by the Baltimore City Fire Department, this is the equivalent of using firefighters to do the work of emergency medical technicians (EMTs) because there is a deficit of funding to the EMT service. Put simply, both an EMT and a Firefighter can provide life-saving medical care, just like a CSO and a Deputy Sheriff can both protect a courtroom; however, the reverse is not true in either case. Just like an EMT is not trained or equipped to fight a fire, a CSO is not authorized or equipped to exercise the law enforcement authority of a Deputy Sheriff.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Md. Code Ann Pub. Safety § 3-511d)(c)(2).

<sup>29</sup> Md. Code Ann Pub. Safety § 3-511d)(c)(1)(ii).

<sup>30</sup> This analogy only goes as far as understanding that the Baltimore City Fire Department is a creature of City Code and therefore are entirely under the control and direction of the Mayor & City Council. However, the two divisions of the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office are established under State law, and the City of Baltimore, while a source of funding for the Office, lacks any appointment authority or discretion to direct its actions; only the General Assembly may do so.

In the opinion of the BCSO, continuing to use Deputy Sheriffs to provide the services that a CSO can provide is not an efficient and effective use of taxpayer resources, nor does the BCSO believe it is in the public interest or in the best interests of the mission of the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office.

## II. Detrimental Impact of the Proposed Cuts to Six (6) Deputy Sheriff Positions

In concluding this letter, the BCSO turns to the most urgent matter of attention, which are the proposed cuts made by BBMR to six (6) Deputy Sheriff PINs in the current City Budget bill.

After undertaking an honest assessment of the needs of the office as explained above, from a purely fiscal viewpoint, cutting approximately \$1 million in Deputy Sheriff salaries will not make the work go away. In fact, when compounded with the current vacancy rate that the BCSO is experiencing, it will only exacerbate the problem.

The BCSO acknowledges that in times of budgetary shortfalls, the Mayor and City Council are often faced with difficult funding choices and the various services they fund may have to engage in some shared sacrifice to acknowledge a fiscal reality. However, in looking at the City Budget bill as a whole, that is simply not the reality of the legislation. Not only is the BCSO the only public safety entity or independent office that has been given a cut to its personnel, it is the only office headed by an elected official chosen by the voters *not receiving an increase* in personnel funding. (Emphasis added).

If the time comes to make a shared sacrifice, the BBMR asking the BCSO to come to the table as part of a holistic solution to balancing the budget would not be unreasonable. However, that is not what has occurred this time, as neither was the office asked by BBMR to make any sacrifices—they were unilaterally imposed upon them—nor does a holistic review of the City Budget share any of the burden of sacrifice across any other public safety or independent office. It appears the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office budget stands alone in this regard.

In conclusion, if the personnel of the BCSO are not restored to, at minimum, flat funding personnel at the current service level, the work of the Deputy Sheriffs Division directly, and the work of the Court House Security Division derivatively, will be significantly negatively impacted. Put simply, the City Budget proposes to make an overall service deficit rise from -\$6,517,025.00 to -\$7,517,025.00 and this will directly harm the BCSO's ability to adequately secure the courts.

The BCSO brings its concerns to your attention via this letter in an effort to be honest, direct, and operate in good faith through the ordinary local government budgetary process. However, failing to restore the funding for the six (6) Deputy Sheriff personnel PINs in the City Budget legislation will likely result in the BCSO being forced to seek relief from an alternate legal pathway.

Sincerely,



Nicholas T.R. Blendy, Esq.  
*Assistant Sheriff*

Cc: Faith Leach, *City Administrative Officer*  
The Honorable Zeke Cohen, *City Council President*  
The Honorable Mark Parker, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Danielle McCray, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Ryan Dorsey, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Mark Conway, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Sharon Green Middleton, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable James Torrence, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Paris Gray, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable John T. Bullock, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Phylcia Porter, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Zac Blanchard, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Jermaine Jones, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Antonio Glover, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Odette Ramos, *City Council Member*  
The Honorable Audrey J. S. Carrión, *Administrative Judge, Circuit Court for Baltimore City*

## APPENDIX A – COURT HOUSE SECURITY TRUE SALARY COST

### True Salary Costs for Circuit Court House & Annex Building & Judicial Officer Protection

**Total True Salary Cost: \$8,869,943.00**

#### Appointment Calculation Methodology:

Minimum Staffing Level = 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours per Year (8 x 249) = 1,992

Cost per Day (8 hours x \$50 per hour Average Salary<sup>31</sup>) = \$400

**Judicial Officers (Judges & Magistrates & Orphans Court) – \$4,600,000.00\***

Average CSO Cost Per Judge per Year = \$99,600.00

Manpower Hours per Day, 8 hour x 46 Judicial Officers= 368 hours per day

46 CSO-O x \$99,600.00 = \$4,581,600.00

\*Rounded up from \$4,581,600.00, to consider that courts stay late some days

**Doors Staffing: \$2,464,213.00**

Mitchell (Total): \$1,353,050.00

Lexington: \$438,000.00

Calvert West: \$336,250.00

Fayette Street: \$124,500.00

Jury Door: \$354,800.00

Cummings (Total): \$911,693.00

Front Post: \$392,175.00

ADA Door: \$121,118.00

Family Court: \$211,650.00

Garage Post: \$186,750.00

Juvenile (Total): \$199,200.00

**K-9 Staffing: \$306,000.00**

**Camera Monitoring Room (est.): \$200,000.00**

**Internal Facility Security (Floors & Internal Doors, est.): \$800,000.00**

**Internal Lock Up: \$500,000.00**

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<sup>31</sup> \$50 per hour per contractual (no benefits, part-time) employee as a rate was selected based on a market rate for facility security services (reduced from \$60 per hour by the United States Marshal Service for federal court coverage), and is the rate submitted by the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office to the costing methodology contained in the Final Report of the "Task Force to Ensure the Safety of Judicial Facilities", available here: <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/spec-col/sc5300/sc5339/000113/027000/027087/20250181e.pdf>.

**Judges of the Circuit Court of Baltimore City**

**Honorable Audrey J. S. Carrión**

**Administrative Judge and Chief Judge**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 209

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Lynn Stewart Mays**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 214

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Althea M. Handy**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 529

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Sylvester Cox**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 217

100 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Barry G. Williams**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 534

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Yvette M. Bryant**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 252

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Lawrence Fletcher-Hill**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 124

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Kendra Y. Ausby**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 430

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Yolanda Tanner**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 436

100 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Jeannie J. Hong**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 445

100 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Jeffrey Geller**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 551  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Melissa Copeland**

**Judge in Charge Criminal**  
Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 241  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Shannon E. Avery**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 642  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Cynthia H. Jones**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 408  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Michael A. DiPietro**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 550  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Charles H. Dorsey**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 408  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable John S. Nugent**

**Judge in Charge Civil**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 466  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Jennifer B. Schiffer**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 245  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Dana Middleton**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 120  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Robert K. Taylor, Jr.**

Juvenile Justice Center C-3/A3401  
300 N. Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Anthony Vittoria**

Juvenile Justice Center C-2/A3401  
300 N. Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Erik S. Atas**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 205  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Myshala E. Middleton**

**Judge in Charge Family**  
Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 122  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Charles Blomquist**

**Judge in Charge Juvenile**  
Juvenile Justice Center C-1/A3401  
300 North Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable LaZette Ringgold-Kirksey**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 234  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Paul Joseph Cucuzzella**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 407  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Martin H. Schreiber**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 411  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Nicole K. Barmore**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 329  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Alan C. Lazerow**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 126  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Troy K. Hill**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 462  
100 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Levi Zaslow**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 432

100 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Hope Tipton**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 505

111 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Kimberly McBride**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 228

100 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Honorable Piper F. McKeithen**

Mitchell Courthouse, Chambers 424

100 N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Vacant Seat**

??? Courthouse, Chambers ???

1?? N. Calvert Street

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Judge

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrates of the Circuit Court of Baltimore City:**

**Magistrate Claire Costantino**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 321  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Ronika Sumlin**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 101  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Gwendolyn Tate**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 343  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Jennifer Williams**

Cummings Courthouse, Chambers 107  
111 N. Calvert Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate David Addison**

Juvenile Justice Center  
300 North Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Jai Bonner**

Juvenile Justice Center  
300 North Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Patricia Brown**

Juvenile Justice Center  
300 North Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Troy Hill**

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Neeta Kataria**

Juvenile Justice Center  
300 North Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Magistrate Kristin Peacock**

Juvenile Justice Center  
300 North Gay Street  
Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per Magistrate  
Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm  
Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992  
Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400  
Cost per year = 99,600

**Protection of Orphans' Court Judges \$99,600**

Orphans Court Judges are elected officers of the court that hear cases involving estates. The Office of the Mayor, Department of General Services has placed the Orphans Court Judges inside of the Circuit Court Facility (In some other jurisdictions the Orphans Court Judges are in a municipal building or office space not located in a courthouse.) This mandates that the Sheriff's Office provides protection to these judges.

Minimum Staffing Level= 1 CSO-C per entire Orphans' Court

Manpower Hours a day, 8 hour shifts 8:30am-430pm

Manpower hours a year (8 X 249) 1,992

Cost per Day (8hrs X \$50) = \$400

Cost per year = 99,600

**Orphans' Court Judges:**

**Honorable Lewyn S. Garrett, Chief Judge**

Courthouse East, Room 311

111 North Calvert St.

**Honorable Michele Loewenthal, Associate Judge**

Courthouse East, Room 311

111 North Calvert St.

**Honorable Charles G. Bernstein, Associate Judge**

Courthouse East, Room 311

111 North Calvert St.

# **MCPA-MSA SB 544 - Courtroom Security Minimum - SWA**

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: FWA



# Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

## Maryland Sheriffs' Association



### MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and  
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee  
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 18, 2026

RE: **SB 544 - Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard**

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 544 WITH AMENDMENTS**. SB 544 establishes a statutory minimum adequate security standard for courtroom security at all courthouse facilities throughout Maryland. Specifically, the bill would require that during court proceedings there be at least one qualified court security officer in each courtroom, with additional staffing for proceedings involving incarcerated individuals and higher staffing ratios based on the number of courtrooms per floor. These standards phase in beginning July 1, 2027, and expand further in July 2029.

MCPA and MSA support the stated purpose of SB 544, improving courtroom security, as free and fair access to justice requires safe court facilities. We agree that minimum standards can provide consistency across jurisdictions where security capabilities currently vary. That said, as currently drafted, this bill represents an unfunded mandate on sheriffs' offices. Sheriffs in many jurisdictions are already facing staffing shortages and budget constraints that can make it challenging to meet even current security needs.

For the bill to be workable, there must be dedicated funding provided to support the additional deputies and security personnel required to meet the bill's minimum standards. Without reliable state funding, sheriffs' offices, which are primarily responsible for courtroom security in county circuit courts, will be unable to meet the courtroom security standards required in this bill. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 544 WITH AMENDMENTS** and urge a **FAVORABLE** report.

**SB0544-JPR\_MACo\_OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Sample

Position: UNF



## **Senate Bill 544**

### *Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 18, 2026

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 544. This bill would require counties across the state to fund substantially more positions for security officers in the Circuit Courts. While counties support the intent, the bill mandates funding without any clear accounting or detailing, from the courts or Sheriffs, as to the exact cost of officer shortages or needed equipment by jurisdiction. Merely dropping a set of standards as a new county unfunded mandate is untenable. A collaborative state/county approach to these desired improvements is the only reasonable path to implement them.

Circuit Courts are fully funded by county governments but operated by the State, with only a finite number of expenses statutorily eligible for reimbursement from state funding. As written, the bill requires juvenile, family, and criminal law proceedings to have one officer each by the end of the year. Any proceeding with an incarcerated individual would need two officers and an extra officer is required for every four courtrooms per floor in the courthouse. The requirement further specifies that by 2029, all proceedings not included before that time must now have a security officer present.

While these are worthy standards to establish, the actual current security capacity of each Circuit Court has not been made clear to counties, only that it would be a significant increase from current practice. Therefore, anticipating and planning for these new costs in the county budget is not possible at this time, while they are in the midst of budgeting for the effected fiscal year in the bill. Furthermore, to put these standards into effect in January would attempt to mandate a county to provide a significant contribution that is not authorized in the current budget or having gone through the mandated appropriation process. For many jurisdictions, even two more deputies could dwarf their entire annual contingency budget.

It is not a practical solution to assume counties can absorb these new and unclear costs. Counties have very few avenues to raise revenue to support new mandates. County budgets are already deeply strained to cover the substantially increasing mandates in education, state cost shifts, and elsewhere. For this reason, MACo urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report for SB 544.

**SB0544-JPR-LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: INFO



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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.