BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Michael S. Harrison
Police Commissioner

September 8, 2022

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

      RE: City Council Bill #22-0257
               Police Department of Baltimore City—Police Districts—Redistricting

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 22-0257, for the purpose of establishing new boundaries of the Police Department of Baltimore City Police Districts; and providing for a special effective date.

In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation requiring the Baltimore Police Commissioner to prepare a redistricting plan for adjustment of the geographic boundaries and composition of each police district to account for population shifts. That legislation can be found at this link:
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2019RS/chapters_noln/Ch_74_sb0039T.pdf

In preparation of the mandated plan, the Department was required to review and consider the following items:

- ✓ Decennial census population and housing data of the United States Census Bureau;
- ✓ District call volume trends;
- ✓ District response times; and
- ✓ Any other information deemed necessary by the Commissioner.

State law required that a draft plan be submitted to the City Council within one year of the release of the newest census data so that guided the Department's timeline. In August 2021, the federal government released the census data and the BPD team started meeting weekly to develop priorities, catalogue all of the data points that needed to be considered and to identify operational needs to be considered while drafting new boundaries.

Since police district lines had not been adjusted in over 50 years, the Department felt strongly that the community needed to be engaged multiple times to ensure the map addressed community priorities. Prior to the release of a draft map, community sentiment was solicited to understand how residents felt about their current

district boundaries as well as important factors such as the response times they had experienced. After a month-long comment period, we received over 400 responses that included comments such as the Northeastern, Southeastern Districts are too large and requests for certain communities to be put together in one district to facilitate cooperation and community policing goals.

Using that information as a starting point, we prepared the first draft map. From the start, the primary focus of our redistricting effort was to create a balanced workload citywide and to improve resource distribution. In addition, the Department's redistricting team felt strongly that all effort must be made to keep communities together and to allow communities that work together to remain in the same police districts so that they would continue to benefit from a strong community policing effort. As a result, the newly proposed map reunifies 18 neighborhoods that are currently separated by police district lines.

That said, the redistricting process relied upon an analysis of five years' worth of service data at the unit level; more than 200,000 records of Part I crimes, including homicide, shooting, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, larceny from auto, auto theft and arson from 2016 to 2021 as well as 2020 U.S. Census data at the neighborhood level.

"Neighborhood" was used as the unit of analysis in accordance with Baltimore Police Department's initiative to improve public safety and crime prevention through community policing and positive interactions with the city's 278 diverse communities.

Calls for service data were analyzed to estimate the workload for each neighborhood to ensure that the workload was well balanced in the proposed district boundaries. Correlational analyses were also conducted to understand the relationship between workload, crime and population as a guide for further analysis. As an example, workload has a strong correlation with crime and population at the neighborhood level. Workload is also highly correlated with the amount of vacant housing units in a neighborhood. Through the analysis of crime data, high crime areas in need of a unified crime reduction strategy were identified and addressed in the redistricting process.

Aggregated workload, crime and population data were imported into ArcGIS Territory Design solution to generate preliminary district boundaries which were then released to the public for feedback. During this round of engagement, the Department received over 600 written responses as well as many informal comments made during Commander meetings held in each police district.

We evaluated every single response, complaint and concern raised. Then we looked at the data regarding workload analysis and adjusted the draft district boundary lines with the goal of addressing as many community concerns as possible while also ensuring that we met satisfied our overarching goals, which were to:

- ✓ Unite communities,
- ✓ Address operational challenges and
- ✓ Equalize workload across all 9 districts.

While no map will satisfy every request, suggestion or concern, we firmly believe that the map ultimately submitted to the City Council will enable the BPD to:

- ✓ Efficiently manage law enforcement resources
- ✓ Provide the appropriate resources to the districts
- ✓ Respond to crime faster and more efficiently

- ✓ Create a better balance between calls for service and geographic areas
- ✓ Maintain a constant presence in high-crime areas
- ✓ Increase patrols and interactions with neighborhood organizations

Therefore, the BPD strongly supports City Council bill 22-0257. Thank you for allowing us to weigh in on this important piece of legislation. We look forward to a robust conversation about this process as the City Council evaluates this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,
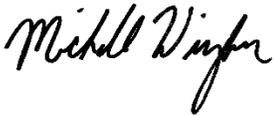
Michelle Wirzberger, Esq.
Chief of Staff

cc: Natwana Austin, Executive Secretary of the Baltimore City Council
       Natasha Mehu, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
       Nina Themelis, Deputy Director, Local and Federal Affairs, MOGR
       Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff
       Shannon Conway, BPD Legislative Coordinator