



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Michael S. Harrison
Police Commissioner

March 2, 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 #21-0055R
Informational Hearing—Holding Gun Offenders Accountable

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

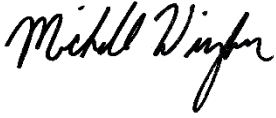
The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 21-0055R which calls on relevant city agency directors to meet with the city council to discuss the prevalence of gun violence, avenues that lead to consistent outcomes, and ways to deter people from possessing illegal firearms. Gun violence plagues our city on a daily basis, pulling families apart and causing the senseless loss of life across neighborhoods. We appreciate any opportunity to weigh in on this topic and discuss possible solutions.

Baltimore City has recorded 51 homicides thus far in 2022. Out of those 51 homicides, 46 have been shootings committed by firearms. In 2021, 338 homicides were recorded with 293 listed as shootings. Resolution 21-0055R notes that for the seventh consecutive year, Baltimore City is on pace to surpass 300 homicides. In the last year we have lost 3 violence interrupters to gun fire, and seen a rise in people using guns to settle both small- and large-scale conflict.

We agree that action must be taken to combat the dangers that our citizens face. Mayor Scott's violence reduction plan is comprised of three pillars, the first being Public Health which includes gun violence prevention, community engagement, and lastly evaluation and accountability. A specialized gun court would aim to move gun offense cases more swiftly through the system in order to get offenders off the streets faster. Commissioner Harrison feels that swiftness of consequences is crucial to reducing violence, therefore the establishment of a gun court could be helpful if the cost is not prohibitive. Gun courts have proven to be successful in other cities. With that said, no two cities are the same and there would need to be great thought given to the structure and focus of the proposed court. Additionally, our court system is facing a huge backlog of cases due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Introducing something new at this point has the potential to be difficult.

We look forward to the upcoming discussion on 21-0055R and other proposed strategies to address this long-standing issue in our city. Thank you for allowing us to weigh in on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Wirzberger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Wirzberger, Esq.
Director of Government Affairs

cc: Natwana Austin, Executive Secretary of the Baltimore City Council
Natasha Mehu, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Nina Themelis, Special Assistant and Legislative Liaison, MOGR
Eric Melancon, BPD Chief of Staff
Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff

[Type here]

[Type here]

[Type here]