

COMPTROLLER

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OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

Department of Audits  
Department of Real Estate  
Municipal Post Office  
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November 16, 2020

The Honorable President and Members  
of the Baltimore City Council  
Attn.: Natawna B. Austin, Executive Secretary Room 409, City Hall  
100 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

***Re: Council Bill 20-0616, "Comptroller—Clerk to Board of Estimates"***

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Comptroller's Office has reviewed Council Bill 20-0616 sponsored by Councilman Henry. This bill would amend Sections 1-1 and 1-2 of Article 5, Subtitle 1 of the City Code to repeal the requirement that the Deputy Comptroller perform the duties of Clerk to the Board of Estimates and instead require "the Comptroller's designee" to perform those duties.

The Office of the Comptroller opposes Council Bill 20-0616. The mandate that the Deputy Comptroller perform the duties of Clerk to the Board of Estimates has been in statute since at least the 1950s if not longer than that. The longstanding practice of the Comptroller's Office for over two decades has been for the Comptroller, in the absence of the Deputy Comptroller, to serve as Clerk to the Board. The Board of Estimates is a unique entity within City government, with authority to review and approve (or disapprove) myriad City contracts, grant agreements, expenditure authorizations, and personnel matters every week. Its business is vitally important to City government, and by extension to the citizens who rely on City government for vital services. It is essential that the duties of Clerk to the Board be performed by a trained professional who is well-versed in City government operations as well as laws and administrative procedures affecting City contracts and financial transactions.

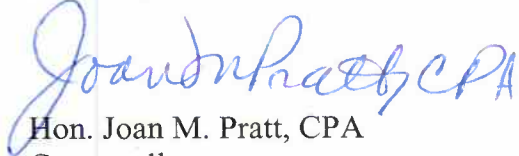
For nearly the last 25 years, the Deputy Comptroller has worked closely with the Comptroller to ensure that the Board of Estimates exercises proper oversight of the matters subject to its authority. Like the position of Comptroller, the Deputy Comptroller's position is explicitly established in Article V, §1 of the City Charter; its placement in the Charter is an indication of the importance of the office. Council Bill 20-0616 as drafted would allow the Comptroller to appoint any staff member to serve as Clerk to the Board. The responsibilities of Clerk to the Board are significant and substantive, and it is appropriate that they be carried out by the Deputy Comptroller as they have been for many years.



*The Honorable President and Members  
of the Baltimore City Council  
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For all these reasons, the Office of the Comptroller opposes Council Bill 20-0616. If you have any questions, please contact me at 410-396-4755.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joan M. Pratt CPA". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Hon. Joan M. Pratt, CPA  
Comptroller

cc: Hon. Bernard C. Jack Young, Mayor  
Hon. Brandon Scott, President, City Council  
Mr. Victor Tervalo, Chief Solicitor, Baltimore City Law Department  
Mr. Dominic McAlily, Legislative Assistant, Office of the City Council President  
Mr. Matt Stegman, Deputy Director of Government Relations, Office of the Mayor  
Ms. Nina Themelis, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Mayor  
Ms. K.C. Kelleher, Legislative Director, Council District 4