



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Michael S. Harrison
Police Commissioner

August 25, 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 #22-0111R
Informational Hearing- Addressing Youth Violence in Baltimore City**

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 22-0111R for the purpose of inviting the Baltimore City Police Commissioner; several relevant Baltimore City agency leaders; and interested members of the Baltimore City Youth Commission to come before the City Council to discuss the increase in youth violence across the city; and the risk factors that are driving these incidents.

As the numbers sadly reflect, the amount of juvenile offenders and victims of violent crime have remained unacceptably high. This occurrence is due to a plethora of factors which include lack of access to resources, drug abuse, and exposure to trauma among other things.

BPD has a responsibility to protect and engage with the community, including our young residents. The mission of BPD's Community Policing effort is to improve police-community relations, and reduce crime and disorder through collaborative problem-solving partnerships with the community. Positive involvement with juveniles can change the trajectory of young lives.

Last year, the Baltimore Police Department engaged with youth in several creative ways, including but not limited to:

- Engaging in a strong partnership with Project Pneuma
- Food Drives and Holiday Meal Programs
- Father/ Son Basketball Games
- Identifying at Risk Youth individuals, visiting at schools, and making referrals to diversion programs
- Organizing a youth football league complete with practices and matches
- Mentoring teens at the Boys and Girls Club

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- After school and summer visits to various recreation centers
- Swim nights, neighborhood bike rides, and school meet and greet sessions

Aside from the above-mentioned activities, BPD also manages the Explorers' Program for those interested in a future career in law enforcement. The program is based on 6 pillars: career, education, community service, diversity, leadership, and violence prevention. In its entirety the program stretched for 36 weeks and includes training, competition, and practical experience.

Most recently BPD has utilized partnerships to turn problems into opportunity for young people. This past spring, Major Thacker of the Eastern District faced an issue with "pop up" parties, unpermitted events on residential streets being organized by juveniles. BPD collaborated with MONSE and several city agencies to deter these unpermitted events and to set youth organizers on a more positive path where they could leverage their skills to help with city events.

Reducing youth violence is a top priority of the Baltimore Police Department but we also believe it will take a multi-disciplinary approach in order to achieve sustainable systemic reductions. We look forward to further discussing our ideas and goals as well as hearing input from different perspectives.

The BPD has no objections to City Council Bill 22-0111R. Thank you for allowing us to comment on this piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



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
Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff
Shannon Conway, BPD Legislative Coordinator