



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE
Mayor

FREDERICK H. BEALEFELD, III
Police Commissioner

July 30, 2010

TO: The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400 City Hall
Attn. Karen Randle

FROM: ^{JAG} James H. Green, Deputy Chief Legal Counsel
Baltimore Police Department

RE: City Council Bill 10-0217R-Investigative Hearing-Dismissal of Rape
Cases

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) is pleased to address City Council Bill 10-0217R-Investigative Hearing-Dismissal of Rape Cases. The resolution requests that the BPD, Office of the State's Attorney, and the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) provide information to the Council and report "why an abnormally high percentage of rape complaints in Baltimore are dismissed as unfounded." Additionally the Resolution requests that the discussion focus on what "changes must be made to ensure that the rape allegations are investigated properly and respectfully."

The bill recitals refer to a recent crime statistics reviewed by the *Baltimore Sun* who reported that a "high percentage of rape cases in Baltimore are ultimately classified as unfounded by the Baltimore Police Department" and that this percentage well exceeded the national average. The report also stated that many calls involving rape allegations were not referred to the specialized investigative unit that handles sexual assaults.

Immediately, after these reports surfaced, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake called for the BPD to conduct internal audit of the unfounded reports reflected in the report and for the BPD to examine current practices and work to develop and implement "best practices" for Baltimore. The Mayor charged her Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) to lead this effort in conjunction with Baltimore's Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and for them to oversee the BPD's development and incorporation of national best practices in investigation and victim support. The necessary goal of this collaboration is to encourage reporting of sexual assaults, improve case investigation protocols, techniques and training, and to provide support and services to victims.

The SART, which represents law enforcement, advocacy, forensics, prosecution, and medical partners, is working with the MOCJ to implement an “action plan” which will develop and implement the necessary reforms. In addition to advising the audit process, the SART has agreed to support a grant application to request funding resources necessary to this work.

As part of this process and working with the sexual assault advocacy organization, TurnAround, Inc, Mayor Rawlings-Blake has created the Sexual Assault Response Hotline to allow victim/survivors of rape and sexual assault to connect with services and report past incidents or mistreatment that may have occurred while reporting a crime of sexual assault. Cases referred from the hotline and all rape cases from the beginning of 2009 will become part of the overall audit and will be conducted by a team of specially trained BPD detectives and the State’s Attorney’s Office.

Additional immediate steps include that the BPD has directed that patrol offices are no longer permitted to “unfound” rape cases and must refer all cases to specialized detectives. Specialized training was recently completed for all detectives and provided by the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA). Finally the BPD has begun the process of revising standard operating procedures and General Orders for sexual assault investigations and is creating a more professional workspace and interview room for victims.

The BPD welcomes the opportunity to more fully discuss with the Council the steps taken to date and how the collective process will move forward. The Department recognizes the importance of the process outlined above and needs to ensure that it is not only thorough but in keeping with national best practices. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

cc: Angela Gibson, Mayor’s Legislative Liaison