

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE

*26-0172 – Charter Amendment
Charter Committee Recommendations*

Public Testimony

From: Janie Gordon

Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 8:05 PM

To: District 7 Staff <District7Staff@baltimorecity.gov>

Subject: Please support Amendments to the City Charter that would give the City Council more power over the budget process

Dear Councilman Torrence

As an admirer of your work on the council, I want to let you know that I am a strong supporter of amendments being considered to the City Charter that would give the City Council more power over the budget process.

It would give the council more time to scrutinize the mayor's budget. It would fix a costly contracting system. It would simplify minor permits, and bypass the redundant Board of Estimates from the budget process. It would also improve legislative oversight of city spending by requiring troubled city agencies to report improvements before getting funding..

These changes would strengthen our City Council and make the body a more effective voice for Baltimore citizens. I urge you to join me in supporting these positive changes.

Thank you.

Janice Gordon

From: Joan Jacobson

Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 8:00 PM

To: District 7 Staff <District7Staff@baltimorecity.gov>

Subject: Please vote YES on Council Bill 26-1071 Charter Amendment

Dear Council Member Torrence,

I write to you today in support of the proposed Charter amendments in Council Bill 26-0172.

As you know, our Charter is the most important document that governs our city, but many provisions are outdated, preventing you and your fellow council members from best serving the people of Baltimore.

The proposed changes in Council Bill 26-0172 would undeniably improve city governance and further empower the people to participate in the most important decisions affecting Baltimore. I particularly like the idea of bypassing the Board of Estimates and giving you and other council members more time to consider budget changes. I also strongly favor giving the council the power for conditional funding to hold city agencies accountable and to create non-lapsing funds for good causes.

Please vote YES.

Joan Jacobson

Longtime city resident and a member of Jews United for Justice

From: Briana Ciccarino
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 8:03 PM
To: District 7 Staff <District7Staff@baltimorecity.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Council Bill 26-0172

Dear Council Member Torrence,

My name is Briana Ciccarino and I'm a member of your district. I live, work and advocate in Baltimore. I'm a member of the Baltimore Action Team with Jews United for Justice. JUFJ moves our region closer to equity and justice by advancing issue-based campaigns that make real, immediate, and concrete improvements in people's lives and build the power of working-class and poor communities of color.

I write to you today in support of the proposed Charter amendments in Council Bill 26-0172. Our Charter is the most important document that governs our city, but many provisions are outdated, preventing our elected officials from best serving the people of Baltimore.

The proposed changes in Council Bill 26-0172 would undeniably improve city governance and further empower the people to participate in the most important decisions affecting Baltimore.

I write specifically in support of:

Making budget reforms that empower the Council, and thereby the people, over city finances: The proposed budget reforms would remove the redundant Board of Estimates from the process, giving the City Council more time to deliberate over the Ordinance of Estimates. It would also put the City Council on equal footing to other legislative bodies in Maryland and around the country. Our budget is a statement of our values.

Permitting conditional appropriations to ensure accountable and effective spending of City tax dollars: Congress, the Maryland General Assembly, and other legislative bodies regularly require agencies to meet certain conditions before the release of appropriated funds. These conditions may require a detailed report, the attainment of certain metrics, or any other stipulation the legislature sees fit. This conditional spending is an important part of a legislature's ability to ensure that agencies are spending tax dollars both effectively and in line with legislative intent. The City Council, which appropriates billions of dollars every year to city agencies, however, is regularly told "no" when it makes requests of city agencies. This is unacceptable, and the authority to set conditions on appropriations is an important part of the proposed reforms.

Removing procurement procedures from the Charter to allow for the development of a more flexible and improvement process: The present provision in the Charter that mandates the city accept the lowest bidder for any procurement contract means the city often gets the cheapest, rather than the best, product. Frequently, businesses submit artificially low bids, begin work, and then come back to the Board of Estimates and demand more, knowing the city is hardly in a position to refuse. Procurement procedures need not be in the Charter, and I have faith that our elected officials can create a new and improved system, which can more easily be updated, in city code.

There is certainly room for disagreement on both the substance and process that resulted in this bill, but Council President Cohen has made clear that this is an ongoing process that will continue into 2028. While I certainly wish the process had more time for deliberation, City residents really cannot wait two more years for change.

I hope that you will support this bill as it moves towards the finish line.

Thank you for your time.

Briana Ciccarino, LMSW