



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Michael S. Harrison
Police Commissioner

November 17, 2021

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: City Council Bill #21-0094
Public Safety Apprenticeship Program – Establishment
(The Hometown Heroes Act)

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed Council Bill 21-0094 which is for the purpose of establishing and implementing a Public Safety Apprenticeship Program for Baltimore City; providing for the development and oversight the Program by the Baltimore City Fire Department in partnership with certain other public safety agencies in Baltimore City; and requiring that the Baltimore City Fire Department report annually certain information to the Mayor and City Council and requiring the report to be made available on the Department's website.

The BPD is supportive of the aspirational goals of this bill which is designed to assist the city's public safety agencies in encouraging young Baltimore City residents to develop an interest in public service. However, we have serious concerns regarding the operational feasibility of the program described in the bill. We lay out a few of those concerns below.

1. One of our main concerns is the unintended negative consequences that will be experienced as a result of one city agency managing the recruitment, hiring and then training of young people interested in careers with five different agencies with five different missions, goals, and sets of employment requirements.

Put more directly, the Fire Department is not familiar with the unique challenges of law enforcement, nor do they have any expertise regarding how to select or train individuals for employment within this profession. Similarly, employees of the BPD are in no way capable of determining who might be a good fit to serve in the Fire Department.

2. This bill is duplicitous in that BPD already has very similar programs to those detailed in this bill:

- a. **Cadet Program**

Individuals are eligible to serve in this role between the ages of 18 and 20 years and 6 months if they meet the following qualifications:

- ✓ Possess a high school diploma or an equivalent which is acceptable to the Maryland State Board of Education

- ✓ Possess a valid Driver’s License or a valid Maryland Provisional Driver’s License at the time of appointment
- ✓ Achieve a passing score on the NTN Examination for Police Officer Trainee
- ✓ Pass a physical agility test
- ✓ Successfully complete a comprehensive background investigation to include a polygraph examination, and physical

Upon hire, cadets receive an annual salary of \$31,388, complete rotations in various units in the Department to learn about the different facets of policing and attend the Baltimore Community College to study: Introduction to Criminal Justice; Writing for Criminal Justice; Fundamentals in Law Enforcement; Introduction to Psychology; Emphasis on Writing and Communication; and Developmental Psychology.

In 2019, the Department released a digital marketing campaign geared towards attracting more police officer and cadet candidates from Baltimore City, as well as more women and minorities. In the ad, the department invited a new generation of officers to, “Be part of the greatest comeback story in America.” Much of the original campaign was geared toward recruiting young folks by utilizing geocoding and targeted marketing strategies on social media. As we work to refresh the campaign, we plan to continue to reach out to that population in the hopes of increasing our cadet pool.

b. Police Explorer’s Program

It is the mission of the Baltimore Police Explorers Program to cultivate youth into productive citizens through a career path in law enforcement therefore, developing healthier, safer neighborhoods while promoting leadership, nonviolence, and diversity in the future law enforcement of the Baltimore Police Department.

The Explorers Program operates off of 6 pillars for success:

- ✓ Character Development
- ✓ Violence Prevention (domestic violence, bullying, street violence, gangs, sex trafficking)
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Diversity (racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, sexual orientation)
- ✓ Community Service
- ✓ Career Education

Through the Explorers daily interaction with their peers as well as structured assembly forums where Explorers will have positive dialogues regarding the pillars of our program, the entire student body is exposed to good citizenship, conflict resolution, and community policing.

3. Section (E)(5) on page 7 of the bill will not work for the BPD. That section states that “Any individual who successfully completes the public safety cadet post with a public safety agency, in accordance with the Baltimore City Administrative Manual, shall be appointed to fill a vacancy in a uniformed position in the lowest grade of the public safety agency without certification from an eligibility list prepared by the Department of Human Resources or the public safety agency hiring the individual.”

The Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) establishes the criteria that all Police Officer Trainees (POT) must meet in order to qualify for a provisional certification. As such, all candidates must submit to and pass a background check, polygraph exam, psychological exam and an in-person interview within the 365 days prior to their application being sent to MPTSC. The BPD and all applicants must comply with this mandate. Cadets who are age-eligible to transition to a POT are not required to submit to a physical agility test or the NTN exam.

4. The Department's Cadet program has been certified by the Maryland State Department of Labor Apprenticeship & Training Program since July, 2018. A mandate of the state program is that participants receive "related classroom instruction." As such, cadets must receive a minimum of 144 hours of classroom instruction in theoretical and technical subjects. BPD has partnered with Baltimore Community College to ensure all cadets take two classes per semester. We are concerned that if the program is reimagined within the Fire Department, the current program could lose its certification.
5. Another concern we have is with the requirement in (D)(2)(II) on page 5 of the bill which states that a candidate for the Public Safety Internship must have participated in at least 60% of the Explorer's Post activities within the fiscal year immediately preceding the application. We feel this mandate may significantly limit the number of young folks who would be eligible for the program. BPD regularly participates in the summer YouthWorks program which is very similar to what is proposed within the legislation but it allows greater flexibility and a wider number of youth to experience summer employment with the agency to determine if a law enforcement career is right for them.
6. Finally, we have some concern that the bill would eliminate or supersede the Department's existing Explorer's Program. The Consent Decree mandates that the Department continue the program as a way to encourage young residents to pursue career in law enforcement while also strengthening our relationship with the community we serve. We would have to ensure that the bill does not have an adverse impact on our ability to comply with those requirements.

Just like the bill sponsor, the BPD is committed to creating pathways for young Baltimore City residents to enter the law enforcement profession. That is why we created the Explorer's and Cadet programs and why our recruitment marketing plan has targeted Baltimore City residents. As we continue to recover from the pandemic and life gets back to normal, we fully expect to expand participation in both the Explorer's and the Cadet programs.

We look forward to working with the sponsor and the Public Safety and Government Operations Committee to ensure that the existing programs meet the sponsor's goals while eliminating any possible unintended consequences that could be experienced if the legislation is implemented as written. 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 Themalis, Special Assistant and Legislative Liaison, MOGR
Eric Melancon, BPD Chief of Staff
Andrew Smullian, BPD Deputy Chief of Staff