

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE

26-0164

Charter Amendment

Inspector General – Custodian of Records

Public Testimony

CITY OF BALTIMORE

Brandon M. Scott – Mayor
Zeke Cohen – Council President



Office of Council Services

Nancy Mead - Director
100 Holliday Street, Room 415
Baltimore, MD 21202

CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The Honorable Ryan Dorsey
CHAIR

Attendance Sheet

5/6/2026

26-0164

Charter Amendment – Inspector General – Custodian of Records

SIGN IN TO TESTIFY			Position:		Check if Baltimore City lobbyist*
FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ORGANIZATION AND/OR CONTACT INFORMATION	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	
✓ Markus	Cannon	Retired Baltimore VA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Min Christina	Flowers	Homeless Advocate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Peter	Richkus	410.746.9246	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ MARY	Taylor	410 493 4023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ April	Lehman	dc.baltimore.2050@gmail.com	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ AI	Freihofen	443 629 8188	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ JESMONA	BIGBINS	Citizen/Resident	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓ Delona Cosby	Cosby	443 (667) 527-4033	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* IF YOU ARE COMPENSATED OR INCUR EXPENSES IN CONNECTION WITH THIS BILL, YOU MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW TO REGISTER WITH THE CITY ETHICS BOARD AS A LOBBYIST. REGISTRATION CAN BE DONE ONLINE AND IS A SIMPLE PROCESS. FOR INFORMATION VISIT: [HTTPS://ETHICS.BALTIMORECITY.GOV/](https://ethics.baltimorecity.gov/) OR CALL: (410) 396-7986

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✓ Staniel	McNair		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keith	Holt	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ORGANIZATION AND/OR CONTACT INFORMATION	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	
<i>Row</i>	<i>Furrow</i>	<i>MAX'S TAPHOUSE</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ORGANIZATION AND/OR CONTACT INFORMATION	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	
✓ HERNANDEZ	DICKSON	THE CHAIR 443-829-8601 BAMBOO PROJECT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Testimony Before the Charter Review Special Committee

To: The Charter Review Special Committee

From: Jesmond O. Riggins, Esq.

Re: *City Council Bill 26-0164 – Charter Amendment – Inspector General – Custodian of Records*

Position: **Support**

Date: May 5, 2026

Chair Dorsey, Vice Chair Bullock, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Jesmond Riggins. I am a member of the Police Accountability Board and a former member of the Administrative Charging Committee—which is an independent body that reviews police misconduct investigations and determines whether officers should be charged. I also previously served as the Civilian Review Board Supervisor.

I want to be clear: I am speaking today as a private citizen, based on my experience inside Baltimore’s oversight system—not on behalf of the PAB or the ACC.

I am here to support the proposed charter amendment to make the Inspector General a co-custodian of documents.

But this hearing is about more than the Inspector General.

It is about whether oversight in Baltimore City will function as intended—or whether it will continue to be limited in ways the public cannot see.

Oversight only works if it has three things: access to information, independence, and the ability to speak freely. When those are constrained, oversight weakens. When they are blocked, oversight stops.

We are seeing that pressure today with the Inspector General.

And we have seen it before.

Under state law, the Civilian Review Board had clear authority to receive investigative files and issue subpoenas. When the Board refused to accept restrictive conditions, the Law Department advised the police department to stop sending those files. The Board issued subpoenas to compel production. The Law Department declined to enforce them.

So, the Board acted. It retained independent counsel and went to court against the Law Department's will.

Only then did the Law Department reverse course and advise the police department to provide the files. After that, the Board dropped its lawsuit.

That sequence matters.

The law gave the Board authority. But it had to fight to use it.

We are now seeing a similar dynamic playout with the Inspector General.

The City Charter gives the Inspector General authority to issue subpoenas for documents needed to conduct investigations. Yet that authority has now being narrowed—through interpretation—when involving city agencies.

The Law Department plays a central role here. It interprets the law for the City, advises agencies on how to respond, and decides whether and how to act when subpoenas are issued.

When that interpretation limits the reach of oversight powers, it directly affects whether those powers can be used.

And this issue is not isolated.

Last year, the Law Department communicated similar limits to the Administrative Charging Committee regarding its subpoena authority.

Different bodies. Different moments. Same pressure point. And the same tool: Interpretation.

When interpretation reads powers out of the law—or limits them to the point where they cannot be effectively exercised—it does more than create disagreement. It limits oversight.

And because Baltimore's oversight system is interconnected, the effects do not stay contained.

The Inspector General, the Police Accountability Board, and the Administrative Charging Committee are all part of one oversight and accountability system.

If one part is weakened, then the others are too.

If this can happen to the Inspector General, it can happen to the Administrative Charging Committee. In fact, it has already happened to the Civilian Review Board.

That is why this amendment matters.

Making the Inspector General a co-custodian of documents protects access to information, which is the foundation of oversight.

But it should be understood as a first step.

I urge this Committee to advance this amendment without delay and place it before the voters. I urge the full Council to do the same.

And I urge you to go further.

Enshrine the independence of the Police Accountability Board and the Administrative Charging Committee in the City Charter.

Create an independent Office of Police Oversight and Accountability to support them—separate from structures that may have competing interests.

This is urgent.

At a time when public trust depends on accountability, we cannot allow oversight to be limited by interpretation, access barriers, or structural design.

Finally, I ask the public—and the press—to pay close attention to how decisions about oversight are made in this city.

Not just what is said, but what is done.

Because oversight is not defined by what is written in law.

It is defined by whether those powers can actually be used.

Thank you.

From: Carolyn Carey

Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 4:27 PM

To: Charter Review Committee (City Council) <charter.review.committee@baltimorecity.gov>; Cohen, Zeke (City Council) <Zeke.Cohen@baltimorecity.gov>; Conway, Mark (City Council) <Mark.Conway@baltimorecity.gov>; McCray, Danielle (City Council) <Danielle.McCray@baltimorecity.gov>; Parker, Mark (City Council) <mark.parker@baltimorecity.gov>; Schleifer, Isaac (City Council) <Isaac.Schleifer@baltimorecity.gov>; Middleton, Sharon (City Council) <Sharon.Middleton@baltimorecity.gov>; Torrence, James (City Council) <James.Torrence@baltimorecity.gov>; Gray, Paris (City Council) <Paris.Gray@baltimorecity.gov>; Bullock, John (City Council) <John.Bullock@baltimorecity.gov>; Porter, Phylicia R.L. (City Council) <Phylicia.Porter@baltimorecity.gov>; Blanchard, Zachary (City Council) <zachary.blanchard@baltimorecity.gov>; Jones, Jermaine (City Council) <jermaine.jones@baltimorecity.gov>; Glover, Antonio (City Council) <Antonio.Glover@baltimorecity.gov>; Ramos, Odette (City Council) <Odette.Ramos@baltimorecity.gov>

Subject: Charter Review Special Committee Meeting May 6, 2026 - Testimony

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding City Council Bill 26 0164. As the Chair was unable to reach all virtual attendees during the recent session, I am submitting my written testimony for your consideration.

There is no dispute that a Charter amendment cannot override State law, including the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA). However, the central question is whether this bill must be interpreted as doing so.

The PIA governs public disclosure, not internal access by officials performing their lawful duties. This bill does not require the Inspector General to release records to the public, respond to PIA requests, or override mandatory denials; those responsibilities remain with the originating agencies.

This amendment is specifically limited to investigations of fraud, financial waste, and abuse. Interpreting State law to require that the Inspector General receive only heavily redacted records—even during such investigations—risks undermining the office that voters approved in 2018.

Courts generally favor interpretations that harmonize Charter provisions with State law rather than rendering them ineffective. While State law controls public disclosure, it does not prevent the Council from clarifying investigatory access in a manner that preserves full compliance with the Public Information Act.

Respectfully,

Carolyn Carey