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WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON Bill 22-0234: Police Accountability
MY POSITION IS Support with Amendments

As a Baltimore City resident, I am in favor of enhancing police accountability due to patterns of harm to Black and brown bodies at the hands of Baltimore Police Department officers. Community oversight of police practices needs to be improved and structured in a way that keeps all Baltimoreans safe.

I have read portions of the Gun Trace Task Force executive summary (*Anatomy of the Gun Trace Task Force Scandal: Its Origins, Causes, and Consequences*) and watched the series *We Own This City* that, while partially dramatized, is filled with facts about corruption in BPD and criminal acts perpetrated by police against Baltimore's residents. I have read the story of the way BPD officers shot and killed young Donnell Rochester over a bench warrant. I have read the accounts of the shocking and egregious misconduct of Officer Melvin Hill. These patterns add up. Given that more than 4% of officers are administratively suspended or out on disciplinary leave and that more than 300 officers lack the credibility to testify in court, the need for more accountability is clear. Police policing themselves to act with integrity is not working.

We need a police accountability board that provides effective and meaningful civilian oversight of police activities.

A community oversight board can only be effective with the following amendments:

- 1) Counsel for the board must be independent. Any attorney advising the board needs to be free of conflicts of interests with the City and the police department.
- 2) The board membership needs to exclude former police department officers and employees and members of their families. Police-influenced involvement in the board continues the problematic policing by police that has led us to this moment. The community board needs to be composed of community members who are not associated with the police.
- 3) The board membership must be inclusive of community members with a wide range of lived experiences. The requirement of previous professional mediation experience must be stricken, as well as the disqualification of all state and city employees. Instead, restricting state and city employees' participation who would have a clear conflict of interest. Additionally, the barring of anyone who has been sentenced to more than 5 years in prison must be eliminated. Those with experience with the criminal justice system bring a crucial perspective, and we must support re-entry and destigmatization rather than perpetuating the treatment of formerly incarcerated people as second class citizens.

There is precedent in nearby counties for these practices.

We need civilian oversight to keep police accountable to protect Baltimore's residents from any more future harm and to promote ethical policing. These amendments are important elements of support to get there.

I support Bill 22-0234 and urge the addition of amendments about legal counsel and membership requirements.