



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
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October 30, 2019

The Honorable President and
Members of the Baltimore City Council
4th Floor, City Hall
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
c/o Natawna Austin

Re: Bill no. 19-0378 ("Ethics Board – Administration and Staff")

Dear President and City Council Members,

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) has reviewed City Council Bill 19-0378. This Bill would have the Inspector General serve as the Executive Director of the Ethics Board. In reviewing this Bill, the OIG also reviewed Article 8, Ethics, of the Baltimore City Code to acquire a full understanding of the role of the Executive Director in assisting the Board of Ethics.

In order to further public policy principles and foster transparency in government, resources focused on the administrative requirements of the Ethics Article are required. These requirements would include preparation and distributions of required forms, reviewing of statements and reports, maintaining records, providing public access for inspection and copying, publishing information that explains Article 8, facilitating ethics training to Baltimore City employees, addressing and advising complainants as required, as well as providing an annual report. Another important aspect is the Ethics Board is responsible for the compliance of financial disclosure of all City employees who are required to file.

The Baltimore City Ethics Board operates without a dedicated budget. Currently, they are assisted by the staff of Legislative Reference. The staff of Legislative Reference must allocate time away from their primary duties in order to assist the Ethics Board. This model is ineffective and reactive. In comparison, Prince George's County and Montgomery County are jurisdictions that rival Baltimore City in size of constituents served, and both jurisdictions provide dedicated funding for their respective Ethics offices and/or Boards. The Montgomery County Ethics Commission has an approved FY20 Budget of \$467,326 and carries a fulltime staff of three. In order to effectively enforce the requirements of Article 8, it is believed a dedicated staff focused on Ethics is required.

The OIG is in favor of City Council Bill 19-0378 if a dedicated budget is allocated to the Inspector General as the Executive Director to oversee the Baltimore City Ethics. The OIG is recommending funding for two full time positions and operating expenses.

Sincerely,

Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General

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