



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Henry

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Action - Baltimore City Police Commission

FOR the purpose of calling on the General Assembly to enact, and the Governor to sign, legislation authorizing Baltimore City to establish a Police Commission composed of City residents appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council to oversee the Baltimore City Police Department.

Recitals

Many factors have contributed to the violence plaguing our city over the last few months, but it has become clear that little progress will be made in addressing any of them until the relationship between the Baltimore City Police Department and the people of Baltimore has been drastically improved.

Too many Baltimoreans simply do not trust the Police Department, and too many police officers are wary of those in the communities they serve. With this mutual mistrust it is easy for misunderstandings to escalate into unnecessary confrontations, difficult for the Department and citizens to cooperate in the ways necessary to ensure public safety, and all too common for innocent or well-intentioned actions to be viewed as something sinister.

Baltimore cannot succeed while this gap between her citizens and their appointed protectors yawns so wide. We must find a way to get everyone working together as one toward the common goal of making our city a safer and more just community.

Getting police and residents to think of themselves as one community, and to act accordingly, is not a simple task in today's climate. But it is also not a need unique to Baltimore. Other communities have faced this dilemma and found ways to draw closer together.

For example, in San Francisco the police department is not set apart from citizens, but is instead

overseen by a police commission made up of community members. This commission's mission is to set policy for the Police Department and to conduct disciplinary hearings on charges of police misconduct filed by the Chief of Police or Director of the Office of Citizen Complaints, impose discipline in such cases as warranted, and hear police officers' appeals from discipline imposed by the Chief of Police. Operating under this commission San Francisco's police force becomes an extension of her citizenry, with its goals set by citizens and its conduct monitored by them.

Baltimore could adopt a similar model to better integrate the BCPD into the community. Tying the Department to the community by making it responsible to everyday Baltimoreans appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council after a public hearing process would go a long way toward restoring public trust in the police, bridging the communication gap between police and residents, and ensuring that officers understand and advance community goals.

This is a reform that could be instrumental in repairing the police-community relationship and allowing Baltimore to move forward. Granting Baltimore the ability to make this change would not harm any State interest, but could improve the lives of Maryland citizens in Baltimore and beyond.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on the General Assembly to enact, and the Governor to sign, legislation authorizing Baltimore City to establish a Police Commission composed of City residents appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council to oversee the Baltimore City Police Department.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Mayor, the Interim Police Commissioner, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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