



Monday, May 2nd, 2022

Baltimore County Coalition for Police Accountability Statement to the County Council

To the members of the Baltimore County Council:

The Baltimore County Coalition for Police Accountability (BCCPA) is very concerned that the Council plans to approve Bill 24-22 on a compressed schedule. This is the antithesis of a fair and transparent process for developing an effective Police Accountability Board. With only one hearing on the proposed Police Accountability Board bill, the Baltimore County Council plans to vote on the bill on Monday, May 2nd. This rushed process is a disservice to the bill's intent, which is civilian involvement in police accountability.

Community members have not had fair or adequate time to review the content of the current bill, nor has the public been notified of any amendments being considered by the Council. The Council has not publicly responded to nor commented on the various suggested amendments provided by the Coalition, suggestions based on last year's Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, and on best PAB practices of other Maryland jurisdictions and from the National Coalition for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE).

Time and time again, Baltimore County has demonstrated a lack of respect for the voices of its residents. For example, the BCCPA started reaching out to county leaders in October 2021, asking for a proposed timeline and a draft bill but did not receive a response until February 2022. The Administration hosted two community input forums, with less than a week's notice. Then the Council hosted a single "public hearing" on Tuesday, April 26th during its regularly scheduled work session. Nearly thirty residents and advocates signed up to speak at the work session and urged the Council to create a strong Police Accountability Board.

Despite profound community interest in modifying the bill, as evidenced by the work session testimony and the many emails to members of the Council and to the PAB@baltimorecountymd.gov address, the Council continues to move forward to a vote today, Monday, May 2. Without any public notice of potential amendments being considered, including

any mention of the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC) that must also be established by July 1, 2022 along with the PAB, the Council will be turning its back on a public process open to all. The public has had no opportunity to review or comment on Council amendments to Bill 24-22. Maximum transparency is critical, especially for a bill creating a board that needs public trust in order to be effective.

All potential amendments should be posted online, just as the in-person and virtual PAB public input meetings are available online, for the record. This was done on the County Council's page for the redistricting process, so the capability for the Council to do so is clearly available.

We urge the council to host additional hearings for the PAB bill on May 26th and June 6th to allow more community input and transparency. Baltimore County residents should have a chance to review and provide feedback on proposed amendments before there is a vote. This would still provide the Council enough time to vote on the bill and confirm members by the July 1, 2022 deadline.

Since we have had so few opportunities to provide input and express the needs of our communities in this rushed process, the Coalition wants to reiterate our support of the following amendments necessary to improve Bill 24-22, detailed in this [memo](#) sent to the Council on April 20th:

1. The PAB's membership shall reflect the racial, gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural diversity of the County and should be required to include members with a range of professional or lived experiences in areas including, but not limited to, mental health disabilities, substance use disorders, immigration, criminal justice, re-entering citizens, and those living below the poverty guideline for the County.
2. The voting board members shall include a community member from each of the (7) districts in the County, plus two at-large community members
3. The PAB shall have subpoena powers and investigatory powers to adequately investigate the number of complaints filed.
4. The PAB will be adequately funded and staffed to fully perform all of the board's functions and staffed adequately to investigate the number of complaints filed. Staffing should include but not be limited to: Director, several full-time Investigators, a Policy/Data Analyst, an Administrative Assistant, and independent legal counsel.
5. Administrative Law Judges (ALJ) on the trial board should be publicly vetted, similar to all other appointments, through a resolution, public comment period, etc.

The Maryland Police Accountability Act (MPAA) was created with the intent to establish community involvement in the new citizen-led police misconduct investigation process and to build trust between communities and law enforcement by engaging communities in civilian

oversight entities. Let us honor the intent of the MPAA by establishing a Police Accountability Board through a transparent, participatory, and accountable bill-drafting process.

We urge the council to defer the vote on Bill 24-22 to host additional hearings on May 26th and June 6th to allow for more community input and to implement the amendments offered by the Coalition. The Baltimore County Coalition for Police accountability is committed to ensuring a fair and transparent process. Baltimore County residents deserve no less.

Sincerely,

The Baltimore County Coalition for Police Accountability

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland
Baltimore County Progressive Democrats Club
CASA
Common Cause Maryland
Communist Party of the USA, Baltimore Club
Indivisible Towson
Jews United for Justice
League of Women Voters of Baltimore County
Randallstown NAACP
SURJ Baltimore and Howard County
1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Maryland/DC