



Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability

Empower the Baltimore City Civilian Review Board

BILLS SB 441 & HB 991

Reconcile the Baltimore City Civilian Review Board and the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021

BACKGROUND

During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly passed the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021. The law requires each county and Baltimore City to establish a police accountability board that provides oversight over all police departments in that jurisdiction.

Tasks of Police Accountability Boards (PAB):

1. Appoint chair or the chair's designee and two civilian members to the administrative charging committee;
2. Appoint one civilian to their local police internal trial board;
3. Receive complaints of police misconduct filed by members of the public; and
4. Review outcomes of disciplinary matters considered by internal police charging committees.

Additionally, PABs are required to annually submit a report that identifies the trends in the disciplinary process of police officers and recommendations to improve police accountability in that county. PABs must also hold quarterly meetings with heads of law enforcement agencies and the county government to improve matters of policing.

HISTORY OF BALTIMORE CITY'S CIVILIAN REVIEW BOARD

In the 1960s, after growing frustration over widespread police brutality, grassroots and civil rights organizations demanded the establishment of a civilian review board in Baltimore City. After decades of advocacy, the Maryland General Assembly finally established the Baltimore City Civilian Review Board in 1999.

The Civilian Review Board (CRB) takes complaints that allege the use of excessive force, abusive language, harassment, false arrest, and false imprisonment. And the CRB has the authority to investigate complaints and issue subpoenas. The Civilian Review Board also reviews police department procedures and makes recommendations to Baltimore's Police Commissioner.



WHAT MUST HAPPEN NOW?

The responsibilities and functions of the Baltimore City Civilian Review Board, as established in the 1999 statute, are largely duplicative of those required of a new police accountability board.

However, the police accountability boards have certain features that Baltimore's CRB has been advocating for several years, like:

- oversight over broader categories of complaints;
- more opportunities for the CRB to influence the internal disciplinary process; and
- adequate funding for the CRB.

Due to the conflicting statutes, during the 2022 legislative session, the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability – led by partners who are directly impacted by police abuse and including members of the current Baltimore City Civilian Review Board – will support a bill to ensure that the CRB structure and authority remains intact while giving it the additional powers and scope of police accountability boards.

This is our opportunity to achieve maximum police accountability by building upon the infrastructure and expertise of the existing Baltimore City Civilian Review Board.

Find more information about MCJPA's police reform priorities for Maryland, and the more than 90 organizations calling for them:

www.mcjpa.org