



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE
MAYOR

*100 Holliday Street, Room 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202*

May 6, 2015

The Honorable Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

In order to achieve the kind of sustainable reform that Baltimore needs, I am requesting a federal pattern-or-practice investigation, brought pursuant to the federal statute known as “14141,” after its statutory code citation, 42 U.S.C. § 14141. I believe the process can help repair the public’s trust in the Baltimore Police Department – even where that trust has long been broken – by bringing about transparency, accountability, and greater community understanding.

I also want to thank you for taking the time to visit Baltimore yesterday and meet with me to discuss both the circumstances of the past several weeks and the broader issues confronting not only Baltimore City, but the nation. I left our conversation believing that you are truly committed to reforming police practices wherever they might be in need of repair, and I hope that you appreciate the depth of my commitment as well.

In the past several years, I have taken a number of steps to change the culture and practices of the Baltimore Police Department, and I have worked with Commissioner Anthony Batts to build greater trust between the police and the community.

To date, our efforts have included:

- The development in 2013 of a strategic plan for the Baltimore Police Department, commonly known as the “Wasserman Report.” The plan detailed steps the police department would undertake to reduce crime, improve services, increase efficiency, redouble community engagement, and maintain the highest standards of accountability and ethical integrity.
- The dismantling of a police unit known as the Violent Crimes Impact Section, which had been the target of repeated citizen complaints for harassment and use of force.
- Holding a series of public safety town halls across each of Baltimore’s nine police districts starting in March 2014. Commissioner Batts and I solicited community input that was then incorporated into police department changes and reforms. Those reforms have included new ethics and situational training aimed to help our police officers improve the quality of their interactions with citizens.
- Recruitment of the U.S. Department of Justice COPS Program in October 2014 to come to Baltimore and launch a collaborative process to further enhance reforms.
- Adoption of a new schedule for patrol officers that puts more officers on the streets during peak times and enables a faster response to citizen calls. With this new schedule in place, Commissioner Batts was able to order all officers to spend at least a portion of each shift walking through the communities they patrol, allowing the development of deeper relationships between officers and the citizens they protect.

- Appointment of a body camera working group in October 2014 that produced substantive recommendations to bring that technology to the Baltimore Police Department. We are now moving into a procurement process that will have a body camera pilot program in operation in Baltimore by the end of 2015.

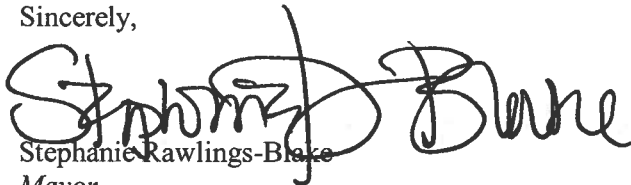
During this most recent session of the Maryland General Assembly, I fought to make substantive changes to the state's Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights that would assist in the disciplinary process of officers engaged in police misconduct. While our efforts did not win approval in 2015, I am optimistic that we will have greater success in 2016. General Assembly leaders yesterday announced they have appointed a panel to study laws the legislature could pass to build greater trust between police and the community.

Our efforts so far are demonstrating progress. In 2014, citizen complaints alleging excessive force were down 46 percent. Police discourtesy complaints were down 53 percent. Notices of lawsuits alleging police misconduct are down dramatically over the past three years. Our Police Department is also reporting greater success at punishing officers who are accused of misconduct.

Nevertheless, it is clear that more must be done, which is why I am making this request for the Department of Justice to launch a federal pattern-or-practice investigation. I am determined to not allow a small handful of bad actors to tarnish the reputation of the overwhelming majority of police officers who are acting with honor and distinction.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. I hope that even with the launch of a pattern-or-practice investigation, the Department of Justice COPS program can continue to remain active in bringing technical assistance to the Baltimore Police Department. I look forward to our continuing dialogue about ways we can work together to bring greater transparency, accountability and trust to the Baltimore Police Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Rawlings-Blake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephanie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Rawlings-Blake".

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

Mayor

City of Baltimore

Cc: Kaliope Parthemos, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Anthony Batts, Commissioner, Baltimore Police Department
Stephanie Robinson, Director of Public Safety, Office of the Mayor
Andrew Smullian, Deputy Mayor of Government Relations and Labor, Office of the Mayor