

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

August 9, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We thank you for your recent involvement in President Biden's announcement of a comprehensive strategy to prevent and respond to gun crime and ensure public safety. In particular, we appreciate that President Biden included Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott at a June 23 meeting with you at the White House to discuss the Administration's new five-part strategy. We are pleased that Baltimore was designated to participate in a Community Violence Intervention (CVI) collaboration program. We support the efforts of our federal, state, and local partners to offer additional and resources to justice-involved persons, including a number of outreach, intervention, and prevention efforts.

On July 12 we met with Mayor Scott, Baltimore Police Commissioner Michael Harrison, and others to discuss the unacceptably high rate of violent crime in Baltimore, and in particular the homicide rate. Our discussion included how to stem the flow of firearms used to commit violence, how to better support local law enforcement with federal tools and resources, and how to invest in evidence-based community violence interventions, such as collaborative initiatives in Baltimore.

Baltimore recorded a total of 335 homicides in 2020, a number second only to the number recorded in 1993 when the population was nearly 125,000 higher. 2020 represented the highest murder rate on a per capita basis ever recorded. Violent crime has spiked in Baltimore, particularly since the death of Freddie Gray in police custody in 2015. We appreciate the involvement of the Justice Department as a partner with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) to enforce and implement the federal consent decree to bring constitutional and effective policing to Baltimore residents.

We write to request several actions that the Justice Department can immediately take on its own authority to address the violent crime problem and murder rate in Baltimore.

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(1) Reevaluation of levels of agency resources to Baltimore metro area

Historically high violence in Baltimore is largely driven by disputes within and between the approximately 300 neighborhood gangs and drug trafficking organizations operating within the city. We greatly appreciate the U.S. Attorney's creation of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Strike Force (hereinafter "Baltimore Strike Force") in Baltimore, and the ensuing coordination between federal, state, and local law enforcement partners. However, in our view staffing levels are artificially limiting the number of long-term gang investigations that could be undertaken. We are aware that the Baltimore offices of our major law enforcement partners are significantly smaller than those located in neighboring jurisdictions. This mismatch between the scale of the problem and the investigatory resources available means that real progress in reducing violent crime will be much more difficult to achieve and sustain.

By way of example, the Washington, D.C. field offices of federal law enforcement agencies – such as the ATF, DEA, FBI, and USMS – are significantly larger than the Baltimore field offices, despite the higher levels of violence in Baltimore. In 2020, Baltimore witnessed 335 homicides in a population of about 600,000 residents, which comes to a murder rate of about 55 per 100,000 in population. In 2020, Washington, D.C. witnessed 198 homicides in a population of about 700,000 residents, which comes to a murder rate of about 28 per 100,000 in population.

We therefore request a reevaluation of the number of agents assigned to Maryland by these federal agencies on a permanent basis.

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(2) Additional ATF Assistance (New Agents)

We note that on July 22 Washington, DC was selected as a location for a new firearms trafficking strike force to help reduce gun violence across jurisdictional lines. We understand these strike forces will help stem the supply of illegally trafficked firearms from source cities. We ask that you direct the Washington, DC strike force to closely coordinate with its federal, state, and local partners in Baltimore to stem the flow of illegal firearms into the city, as many of the firearms used illegally to commit crimes in Baltimore come from out-of-state.

We commend the collaboration between our U.S. Attorney's office, ATF, and our local partners in bringing charges on June 3 against the "Triple C" gang, whose members face a federal indictment on charges related to drug distribution and racketeering conspiracies. The indictment alleges that this gang operated a number of drug distribution "shops" in East and Northeast Baltimore. Members and associates of this gang allegedly committed 18 murders and 27 attempted murders, while engaging in carjackings, robberies, assaults, and witness intimidation.

We specifically request that Baltimore receive additional ATF assistance through the assignment of 10 permanent new agents to Baltimore, who could assist the Baltimore Strike Force and BPD detectives with homicide and non-fatal shooting cases.

(3) Additional US Marshals Assistance (New Marshals)

We request additional assistance from the US Marshals Service. Effective and efficient warrant service for violent crimes is one of the most crucial ways that we can send a message that those who inflict trauma on our city will be held accountable for their actions. Warrant service is highly technical, often times dangerous, and very resource intensive. Baltimore's Warrant Apprehension Task Force can use additional resources to help increase the BPD clearance rate for homicides, non-fatal shootings, and robberies. We specifically request the assignment of 15 permanent new Deputy U.S. Marshals from the Marshals Service to Baltimore in order to assist the BPD Warrants Apprehension Task Force in serving homicide, non-fatal shooting, and robbery warrants, as well as assist the BPD with serving other harm index warrants.

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(4) Assignment of additional new prosecutors

Our U.S. Attorney's office has rightly and effectively targeted the most violent areas of Baltimore and the individuals driving the firearm-driven violence. Hiring five additional permanent Assistant U.S. Attorneys would significantly increase the capacity of our U.S. Attorney's office to bring these types of proactive, impactful prosecutions in Baltimore, with a focus on organized crime, violent crime, and firearms prosecutors, as well as group violence reduction prosecutors.

(5) Additional resources for Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs

We are pleased that Baltimore was designated to participate in a CVI collaboration program, and request additional resources from your Department in order to effectively implement this program. We ask the Department for additional flexibility, pursuant to relevant guidance, for the use of these funds for CVI programming.

(6) Assignment of additional data analysts for analytic support

Analytical support is an increasingly important aspect of any long-term gang investigation. The sheer volume of data available is multiplying exponentially with these types of cases, including social media activity, phone records, violent crime data, or forensic evidence used by data analysts. Additional data analysts would allow for a larger number of impactful investigations as well as potentially strengthen pending cases in Baltimore. Additional federal resources can fund additional analysts for Baltimore City Intelligence Centers (BCIC's), along with additional analysts for the Baltimore Strike Force.

(7) Expedited provision of Palantir or Nighthawk tools

Given the explosion of digital evidence now available online (including through social media), social media analytical tools such as Palantir or Nighthawk can help investigative and prosecution teams better analyze and organize large data sets, which would increase their productivity. Baltimore City officials are now using the Nighthawk system. DOJ should provide these tools to the Baltimore Strike Force as well.

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(8) Additional grants or resources for victim-witness assistance in city

Baltimore officials would benefit from additional federal funding to maintain the staffing of victim-witness coordinators, as well as pay for housing and transportation for witnesses of violent crime in Baltimore, which is critical to the prosecution of cases brought by state and local officials.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent request, and we look forward to your timely response and working closely with you on this matter. We would be happy to meet with you or schedule a call at your convenience to answer any questions you may have or provide additional information.

Sincerely,

/s/  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

/s/  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

/s/  
C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Kweisi Mfume  
Member of Congress

Cc: Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott  
Baltimore Police Commissioner Michael Harrison  
Director Shantay Jackson, Baltimore Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety &  
Engagement  
Acting U.S. Attorney Jonathan Lenzner, U.S. District of Maryland  
ATF Special Agent in Charge Timothy Jones, Baltimore Field Division  
U.S. Marshal Johnny Hughes, District of Maryland  
DEA Special Agent in Charge Jarod A. Forget, Washington Division  
FBI Special Agent in Charge Thomas J. Sobocinski, Baltimore Field Office