

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

April 4, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Sessions  
Attorney General  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We write to express our strong opposition to any delay in the final consideration and implementation of the consent decree between the U.S. Department of Justice and the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD). We understand that Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh, Baltimore Police Commissioner Kevin Davis, and numerous civil rights groups also oppose the Justice Department's request for a delay out of concern that postponement could further erode the trust between the local government and the citizens of Baltimore. We are gravely concerned that the Justice Department will retreat from its obligation to protect the federal civil rights of the citizens of Baltimore.

Shortly after the death of Freddie Gray in police custody and the subsequent unrest in Baltimore, Mayor Rawlings-Blake requested that the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division open a federal pattern or practice investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department. We supported her request and urged the Justice Department to continue its criminal and civil rights investigation. The Justice Department responded by opening a pattern or practice investigation in May 2015.


As part of this investigation, the Justice Department produced an exhaustive report in August 2016. The report provides a troubling account of the "systemic deficiencies in BPD's policies, training, supervision, and accountability structures" contributing to "a pattern or practice of conduct that violates the Constitution or federal law." In particular, the report details a pattern of illegal stops, searches, arrests and use of excessive force that disproportionately impacted Baltimore's African-American communities.


Given the Justice Department's August 2016 report, we do not believe that the problems addressed by the Baltimore consent decree can be characterized as "the misdeeds of individual bad actors." Your March 31<sup>st</sup> memorandum and the Justice Department's recent motion for a continuance put the important work by the parties of that consent decree at risk. The Justice Department's position will impact the timely and efficient implementation of the consent decree, which is fully supported by the City and BPD. We owe it to the dedicated professional law enforcement officers of the BPD to bring this matter to a just, prompt conclusion.

Therefore, we urge the Justice Department to withdraw its request for a delay in proceedings and to continue working with Baltimore City and BPD as scheduled. We stand ready as a Congressional delegation to work closely with the Justice Department to rebuild public trust in the Baltimore City Police Department through these much-needed and long-overdue reforms.

We look forward to your timely response.

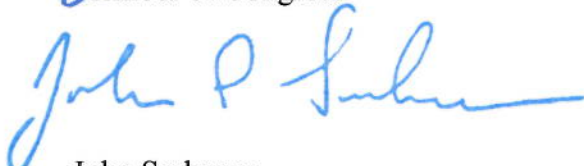
Sincerely,

  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

  
Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress

  
C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger  
Member of Congress

  
John Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Catherine Pugh, Mayor of Baltimore