



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY BEFORE PRESIDENT OBAMA’S TASK FORCE ON  
21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY POLICING:**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today at this first public listening session of the President’s Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing. Thank you to the Task Force co-chairs, as well as my fellow panelists, Mayors Johnson, Nutter and Landrieu.

Today’s topic on building trust and legitimacy are at the forefront of what we have been working to improve in Baltimore, and I am eager to share some of our successes, as well as how the federal government can be a partner in some of the initiatives we are working to implement moving forward.

Over the past several months, we have all seen where the need to build trust between communities of color and law enforcement is an area in need of constant attention. We must remain vigilant in our quest to ensure that our police officers are respectful and accountable – while maintaining our focus on providing safe communities for residents, businesses and visitors.

Baltimore has made tremendous progress in reducing violent crime, but we still struggle to repair the breach between community and police. Four years ago, Baltimore City reached a pivotal moment in our city’s crime fight when for the first time in many years our year end homicide number was less than 200.

As I toured many communities, I expected residents to feel good about the progress being made and acknowledge that Baltimore was turning a corner in the decade’s long history of violence that had plagued our city for generations.

Instead, I heard that while residents acknowledged the significance of the homicide reductions, they were equally concerned about the tactics used by police officers in order to achieve the crime reductions we were experiencing.

Four years later, Baltimore is in a much better place with finding the right balance between being tough on crime and building bridges of trust with the community.

In 2014, Baltimore experienced a 10 percent decline in homicides, as well as a drop in every major crime category – shootings, robberies and burglaries. We have seen significant decreases in the number of excessive force complaints and lawsuits filed against police, while at the same time more residents are reaching out to law enforcement with helpful tips to take violent criminals off the streets. We have demonstrated that Baltimore can learn from its past.

Previously, Baltimore had experienced decreases in crime, yet many neighborhoods felt under siege due to high numbers of arrests. Recent statistics show us striking a better balance, and

police-community relations improving as a result. This past year, we achieved both reductions in violent crime as well as reductions in the number of arrests made.

In 2015, my Administration will continue to work aggressively at ridding our streets of violence and building better relationships between police and the community. We will implement our new police schedule to put more cops on the street during peak periods of crime. We will work in partnership with the Department of Justice's COPS Program to bring additional transparency and accountability to policing, as well as implement a thoughtful and comprehensive police body camera program.

The federal government can be a strong partner in our efforts to build better relationships between the police and community. A good start is a focus on better training for our police officers. They need to learn more than the logistics of policing, but also the broader significance of their role in our society.

My administration has focused police interactions with the community on three core principles – impartiality, legitimacy and procedural justice – and training for the entire department centers on those principles. Our department is adding ethics lessons and situational training exercises – more opportunities for officers to get hands on experience in the proper ways to work with members of the community. The goal is building the belief in every officer that a safe neighborhood can't be achieved without the trust and confidence that comes from community engagement.

But there's more to be done when it comes to training. Our police commanders are constantly seeking additional dollars, both to develop best practices and to then teach those practices to our officers and our developing leaders. If there is any place where the federal government and U.S. Department of Justice could produce a tangible impact on our officers and our efforts, it would be to provide more resources in this area.

Additional grant funding should also be made available to help local jurisdictions expand their internal affairs divisions to better hold law enforcement accountable when they act unlawfully. One of Baltimore's strategic goals is to have Internal Affairs comprised entirely of supervisors. This creates a higher level of accountability in the investigations and ensures that officers are being held accountable for their actions. Having grant funding pay for those positions would expedite that process.

A key focus should also include better utilizing technology to build trust with local communities. Body cameras are the next step in policing. To purchase, issue, maintain, and replace body cameras will be expensive. The bigger expense will be the storage of all the data they record. It is no longer a luxury, but a necessity to hold bad officers accountable and to defend good officers from false accusations. Body cameras are a necessary tool for restoring public trust and something I know the Obama Administration has indicated a commitment too. Having access to the federal funding set aside for the cameras will help Baltimore become one of the first major cities to implement a program city-wide.

Let me conclude by reiterating the deep appreciation and admiration that I have for all of the men and women who work so hard to create safe communities in Baltimore. I know that they face tremendous challenges, and I know the vast majority of them agree that dignity and respect are at the core of strong community policing. Thank you for the opportunity to share our experiences in Baltimore. I look forward to answering any questions.