

Dear Councilmembers,

As a county resident who has been closely following the council's public safety proceedings, I am writing to strongly urge you to support Bill 27-23, which would repeal the Policing Advisory Commission. Aside from the fact that few, if any, members of the commission are subject matter experts on policing, the work the PAC was established to do is already done by other entities.

I urge you to review the history of the PAC proceedings. I suggest you will find the commission adds little if any value, and the cost to the county in time and money is significant and wasteful.

I hope you will focus on the substance of the bill and not be misdirected by colleagues who will deflect by trying to point out problems they have with the process. The facts are what they are, and kicking the can down the road will change nothing. Now is the appropriate time to repeal the PAC.

The turnover rate alone is evidence of an unhealthy commission. Eight of the 13 original voting members have resigned in their first term, and another took a leave of absence to pursue a different opportunity in the county; she returned only because that opportunity didn't pan out. That does not speak of a dedicated membership. A revolving door of members impairs the continuity that is necessary for a commission to be efficient and effective. Currently, three seats are vacant; why aren't they filled?

Other than holding a recent public forum on traffic enforcement, the PAC has not fulfilled the duties for which it was established. It did not issue an annual report last year, and it has not provided feedback on several recent bills. At the public forum, speakers advocated overwhelmingly for increased traffic enforcement, yet the PAC has disregarded that feedback. They have not issued follow-up testimony on how those public comments inform their work.

The PAC was established to supposedly be impartial and objective, yet their words and actions are heavily biased against police, and unduly influenced by anti-LE activists whose mission is to decrease the presence of police in our communities. This leaves many of us in the community with the belief that the county is publicly funding activism (<https://montgomeryperspective.com/2023/01/09/is-this-public-funding-of-advocacy/>). There is no evidence that the PAC takes into consideration that violent crime is steadily increasing, and they have made no recommendations as to how to address violent crime in the context of a critically short-staffed police department.

A review of the PAC's proceedings reveals that the information it requests from police is readily available elsewhere, so it is frivolously misusing taxpayer funds. There are a dozen reports listed on the police department's website; there are 15 police data

dashboards on Data Montgomery; the police department submits data to the council annually under the Community Policing Bill; and Maryland maintains a race-based traffic stop data dashboard. Those resources exist to provide the data that the PAC is then turning around and asking the police to provide. That is the epitome of governmental waste.

There are multiple other ways for the community to provide input. Councilmembers hold their own public safety town halls on a regular basis. The Police Accountability Board holds open meetings. The police department holds meetings with various community groups, including ethnic, racial, immigrant, faith-based, senior and LGBTQ advisory councils. The council holds hearings, such as the one that will be held on Tuesday, June 13, specifically to give the community the opportunity to voice their concerns. Repealing the PAC will have zero impact on the ability of residents to voice their concerns, and in fact, will streamline the process and make it far less confusing.

There is no clear distinction between the PAC and the many other entities that government has tasked with police reform work, including the Executive's Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety; the Police Accountability Board; groups created to provide recommendations on school safety (including the Board of Education study that was cut short when Council Executive Elrich unilaterally eliminated the SRO program); and the audit of the police department, which resulted in two reports with dozens of recommendations. (Incidentally, that audit concluded that in a random study of 50 body-worn camera traffic stops, Montgomery County officers behaved professionally, courteously and without bias; that fact is disregarded by the PAC, which may speak to their anti-police bias.)

The county recently emerged from a difficult budget process that resulted in a tax increase that will be painfully felt by many. The PAC is a wasteful use of taxpayer funds when its functions are duplicated elsewhere (particularly in the PAB but also in other entities) and when even more than half of the original members of the Commission do not find value, as evidenced by their resignations.

Please support Bill 27-23 and repeal the Policing Advisory Commission.

Thank you,

Ann Simon
Rockville, Maryland