



ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL

524 West 59th Street, 53334HH
New York, NY, 10019
(917) 460-7898

Stephen B. Street, Jr.
President

Gregory L. Hill
Executive Director

July 5, 2021

OPEN LETTER TO BALTIMORE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND COUNTY COUNCIL

The Honorable Johnny Olszewski, County Executive
The Honorable Tom Quirk, Council District 1
The Honorable Izzy Patoka, Council District 2
The Honorable Wade Kach, Council District 3
The Honorable Julian E. Jones, Jr, Council Chairman & Council District 4
The Honorable David Marks, Council District 5
The Honorable Cathy Bevins, Council District 6
The Honorable Todd K. Crandell, Council District 7

400 Washington Avenue
Towson, MD 21204

Re: Proposed Bill concerning the Office of the Inspector General

Honorable County Executive Olszewski and Council Members:

The Association of Inspectors General (AIG), is an independent, non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization representing thousands of members working in hundreds of Inspectors General offices across the United States and internationally. The AIG was recently provided a copy of a proposed bill related to the Baltimore County Office of Inspector General and was asked to respond to its content. As the bill has not yet been formally introduced, we will qualify our comments as being based solely upon the copy that was provided. Transparency, accountability and integrity are essential principles and vital to any government's credibility with its citizenry.

Having reviewed the proposed (unintroduced) bill, the Association of Inspectors General has grave concerns regarding its language and structure. We strongly recommend that the proposed bill be re-evaluated and that Baltimore County government proceed with careful deliberation and caution on any such proposed legislation. We would like to point out three preliminary issues that stand out and are contrary to the well-established *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* that have been in place for more than two decades:

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1. The composition of an oversight body that is comprised of elected officials and other politically-appointed persons, who do not possess the requisite knowledge, skills, training or experience in the field of inspections and oversight does not provide actual independence and objectivity from the governmental body.
2. An oversight body with excessive authority and powers over the operations of the Office of the Inspector General that effectively gag and shackle the Inspector General from conducting independent investigations for the ultimate benefit of the citizens of Baltimore County.
3. The implementation of funding, policy and procedural control mechanisms that remove the authority of the Inspector General and place it into the hands of a politically oriented oversight body. Such mechanisms are easily weaponized to influence, intimidate or directly hinder audits, investigations and other actions that are not to the liking of a government or its administration.

The AIG knows from long experience that these issues are not unique to Baltimore County, but have manifested in various forms throughout the country wherever Inspectors General exist. Like those in any democratic society, the citizens of Baltimore County deserve and expect that their government will serve their best interest, and also be transparent and accountable to the public. The proposed bill in its present form, should it become law, will deprive the Inspector General of the ability to fulfill its mission and the independence that it must have in order to be effective. The end result would be the mere appearance of oversight, which is much worse than no oversight at all.

The AIG possesses the experience and expertise in navigating these complex issues and, as a non-partisan and not-for-profit organization, stands ready to assist or provide a more detailed analysis.

With Best Regards, I am

Respectfully,



Stephen B. Street, Jr.

President, Association of Inspectors General

SS/gh/dm

cc: Kelly Madigan, Baltimore County Inspector General