



ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive

May 30, 2023

Council President Vincenti
212 South Bond Street
Bel Air, MD 21014

Re: Sheriff's FY24 Budget Information Request

Dear Council President Vincenti,

You have asked for an explanation for my funding levels for two positions in the Sheriff's FY24 budget.

These funds were, as proposed by the Sheriff, to fund his "Director of Legal Affairs" and his "Assistant Director of Legal Affairs." Note that the Sheriff hired staff for these positions during fiscal year 2023 by reclassifying existing open positions. In his FY24 operating budget request, the Sheriff established these positions at greatly increased salary levels.

Specifically, the Sheriff's 2024 Budget reclassified a vacant "Victims' Rights Advocate" position funded for FY23 at a salary of **\$50,000** as the "Director of Legal Affairs" at a salary of **\$162,000** in FY24. Note that this salary is higher than the salary of the County Attorney, who directs legal affairs for the entire County government and affiliated agencies.

Additionally, the Sheriff's 2024 budget reclassified a "Deputy Recruit" position funded in FY23 at a salary of **\$54,906** as an "Assistant Director of Legal Affairs" at a **\$142,001** in FY24. This particular reclassification takes a deputy off the street. Note that the salary to be paid to the Sheriff's deputy legal advisor is two times the starting salary of a Harford County Assistant State's Attorney.

The Sheriff incorrectly claimed before the Council that amendments to the Maryland Public Safety Article, Section 3-108 require him to employ a legal counsel as a victims' rights advocate. In fact, the code provisions the Sheriff referenced do not suggest the employment of legal counsel but only the employment of a victims' rights advocate. The Office of the State's Attorney and other offices throughout the State employ non-attorney victims' rights advocates at salaries far below the salary the Sheriff seeks for his private legal advisors.

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The Sheriff's proper Director of Legal Affairs and Deputy Director of Legal Affairs already reside in the County Law Department. The County Attorney and his staff have been and remain available to provide the Sheriff's Office with quality legal advice on all matters. There is no necessity for the Sheriff's employment of his own legal advisors. Accordingly, I have removed from the Sheriff's budget all funding for attorney advisors.

It is essential that Harford County maintain fiscal responsibility. The Sheriff has proposed a record smashing \$28M increase in his 2024 operating budget. As you know, that is far above last year's record increase of \$12M, which was twice the previous record increase. The Sheriff's proposed level of funding is on track to double in his eight years in office and is simply unsustainable. As I have done with the Board of Education, the Sheriff and I need to sit down to discuss this matter in considerable detail. Unfortunately, the Sheriff refuses to speak with me directly and has removed his staff from previously established groups intended to foster open dialogue between our offices.

I hope this response is sufficient to respond to your concerns.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Cassilly

cc: Councilman Dion Guthrie
Councilman Aaron Penman
Councilman Tony G. Giangiardano
Councilman James Reilly
Councilwoman Jessica Boyle-Tsottles
Councilman Jacob Bennett