

BALTIMORE CITY OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

*The End of the
First Term*

2018 - 2024

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



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Reflection on a Historical Term: A Message from the Inspector General

Dear Citizens of Baltimore,

We have come so far together in the last six years! From voters' decision to reestablish a truly independent Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Advisory Board to finding \$38 million in City savings and waste avoidance, your support and invaluable tips, combined with our rigorous investigations, has made our Baltimore better.

Throughout my term, the OIG has been steadfast in pursuing accountability and transparency. We take our responsibility as your watchdog to heart: This year alone, the OIG received 827 complaints from Baltimore citizens and, as a result, identified roughly \$17 million in waste and/or savings. That's all while operating on a budget that's just .05% of the City's \$4.3 billion budget!

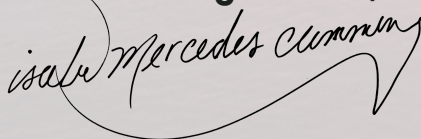
Baltimore citizens and stakeholders have alerted our office to thousands of issues involving possible fraud, financial waste, or abuse since I was appointed by the Mayor in January 2018. It is a testament to our love for this great City that we strive to uphold good governance. I am grateful for and humbled by the trust you have placed in the OIG to ensure the City serves everyone and to hold our leaders accountable should they fail to do so.

As the first person to complete a full term as Inspector General in Baltimore history, I am especially pleased with the strides we have made together. This humble journey as the first woman and Hispanic in this position reflects the progress and inclusivity we strive for in Baltimore, showcasing that leadership can and should represent the diversity of our great city.

The creation of an independent OIG Advisory Board in 2023 was a significant achievement. By removing elected officials and City employees from the Board, we have ensured that oversight remains unbiased and focused on the best interests of the citizens.

As I bid farewell to my first term, the trust you put into this Office does not go unrecognized or unappreciated. I am hopeful for the opportunity to continue serving as Baltimore's Watchdog for another term. The OIG team will persist in its dedication to a stronger, more transparent Baltimore. Our mission to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse in government will continue with unwavering commitment.

With sincere gratitude,



**Inspector General
Baltimore City**

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Photograph taken by : Jimell Greene



The only question to answer is: "What does the evidence show? It may lead down a road you will not want to go down, or it will lead exactly where you thought it would. It may not lead anywhere. Do not ever give up looking for evidence, but do not create it either. Wherever the evidence leads is the path we take. We pursue the truth with an objective mind, without prejudice, and regardless of politics."

OUR MISSION

INVESTIGATIVE CODE

The mission of the Office of the Inspector General is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government by identifying waste, fraud, and abuse to ensure public trust in City government. Citizens have the right to expect efficiency and honesty from City leadership, qualities that are best fostered when the government checks itself and initiates improvements in operational efficiency. The OIG contributes to these objectives through impartial and independent investigation.



2024

Highlights



**OIG Referrals
Made to Other
Agencies:**

104

**Identified
Financial
Impact YTD:**

\$16,903,705.76

**OIG Reports
Issued YTD:**

33

**Active OIG
Investigations:**

30

**Pending OIG
Investigations:**

10

**OIG Outreach
Activities YTD:**

38

Budget History

2024

**\$2,295,109
18 Positions**

2023

**\$2,331,164
18 Positions**

2022

**\$2,406,269
18 Positions**

2021

**\$1,808,349
17 Positions**

2020

**\$1,660,420
13 Positions**

Return On Investment



What is the cost for each resident of Baltimore City in relation to our budget? \$3.98 per person (OIG FY24 Budget \$2,295,109 divided by the population of Baltimore City 576,498)! Basically, the same cost as a Lemon Stick!

\$0.06 cheaper than last year!

The OIG serves a city with a workforce of more than 12,000 employees and is home to nearly 600,000 residents. Most of the OIG's budget is dedicated to salaries and training. OIG investigations require competent investigators. Certification by the Association of Inspector Generals as a Certified Inspector General Investigator will be afforded to OIG investigators at the discretion of the Inspector General. With over 820 hotline calls and each agent carrying between three to four active cases, the challenge of addressing all investigations in a timely manner remains. The remaining portion of the budget is dedicated to operating costs including case management software, computer hardware and maintenance, and two fleet vehicles. In an ongoing effort to act as good financial stewards of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars, we source all of our furniture needs from the City and State Department of General Services' surplus supply of used items and design our Annual Reports in-house.

Agency Overview



Investigations

The Investigations Division is responsible for conducting investigations into a broad range of alleged misconduct including, but not limited to, fraud, bribery, theft, extortion, public corruption, waste of public funds, mismanagement, self-dealing, and nepotism. While the OIG is an investigatory agency, the Office is not an accredited law enforcement agency and consequently lacks the power of arrest. Most of the investigations within the OIG are administrative in nature, but the OIG also conducts criminal investigations in cooperation with our law enforcement partners when appropriate.

Whistleblower

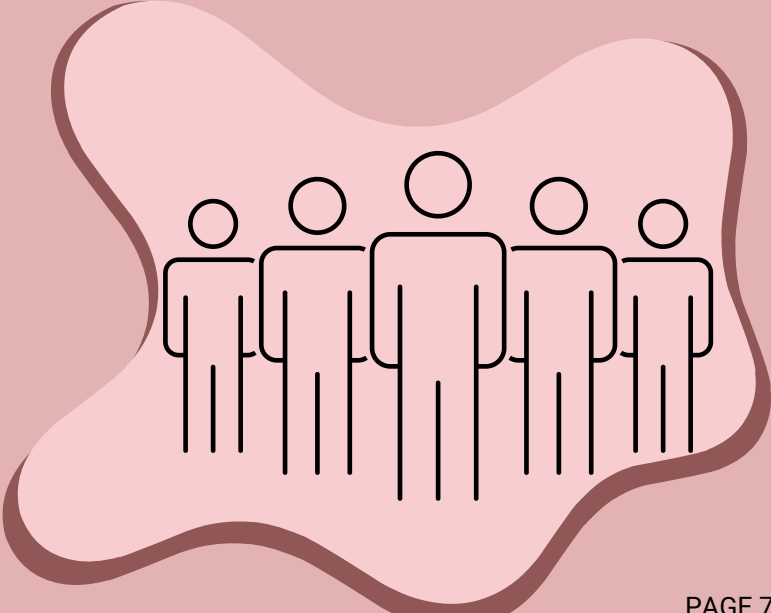
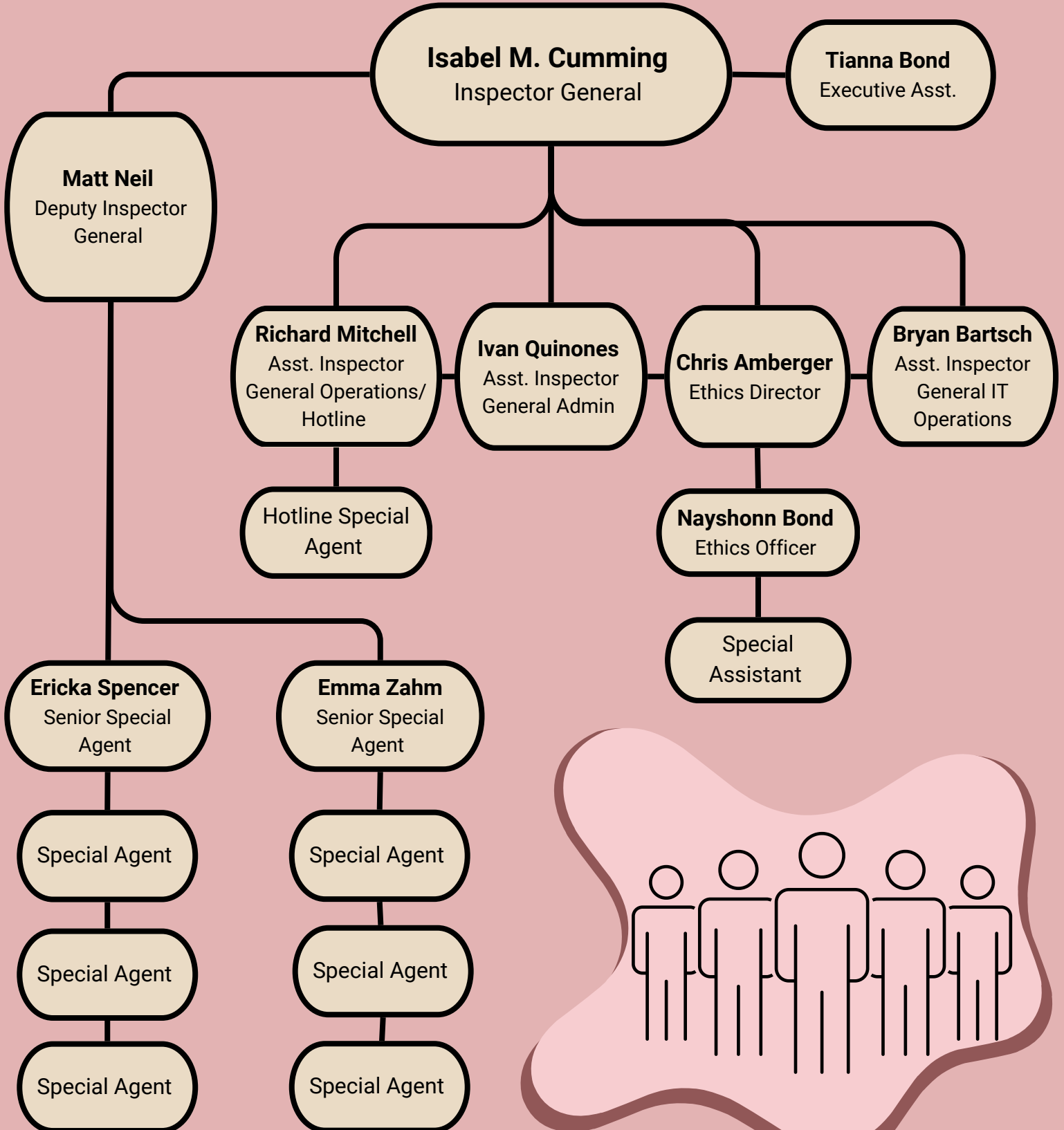
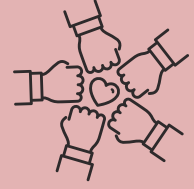
The Whistleblower Rights and Responsibilities Act went into effect on March 15, 2020. This law protects any City employee who makes a covered disclosure related to fraud, gross misuse or waste of public resources, violations of law, and abuse of authority. The scope of the covered disclosure is not limited to what was listed above, but personal grievances or policy disagreements do not qualify an employee to be protected. The law also requires the OIG to implement rules and regulations to enforce the law and aid the Department of Human Resources in training employees about the law.

Ethics

In April of 2020, the City Council voted for Baltimore's Inspector General to become the Executive Director of the Baltimore City Board of Ethics. The Ethics Board is an independent entity that oversees the Baltimore City Public Ethics Law, in Article 8 of the City Code. The Ethics Law ensures that City officials and employees serve the public with fairness and impartially by prohibiting conflicts of interest, among other provisions.

The Inspector General designates staff to assist the Ethics Board in carrying out the Board's duties, which include investigating ethics complaints, promoting awareness of the Ethics Law, overseeing the financial disclosure and lobbying systems and processes, and answering all ethics-related questions from City officials, employees, and members of the public.

OIG Organizational Chart



FY 2024 OIG Hotline Complaint Statistics

827 Complaints Received

CITIZENS (62%)

Individuals and businesses that are interested in the City of Baltimore and its operations.

513

ANONYMOUS OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS (25%)

Individuals whose identities are unknown to the OIG or those electing not to disclose their identities to the public. This may include Employees, Elected Officials, Contractors, or Citizens.

206

CITY OF BALTIMORE EMPLOYEES/ ELECTED OFFICIALS/ CONTRACTORS (12%)

Individuals working in or for a City of Baltimore agency.

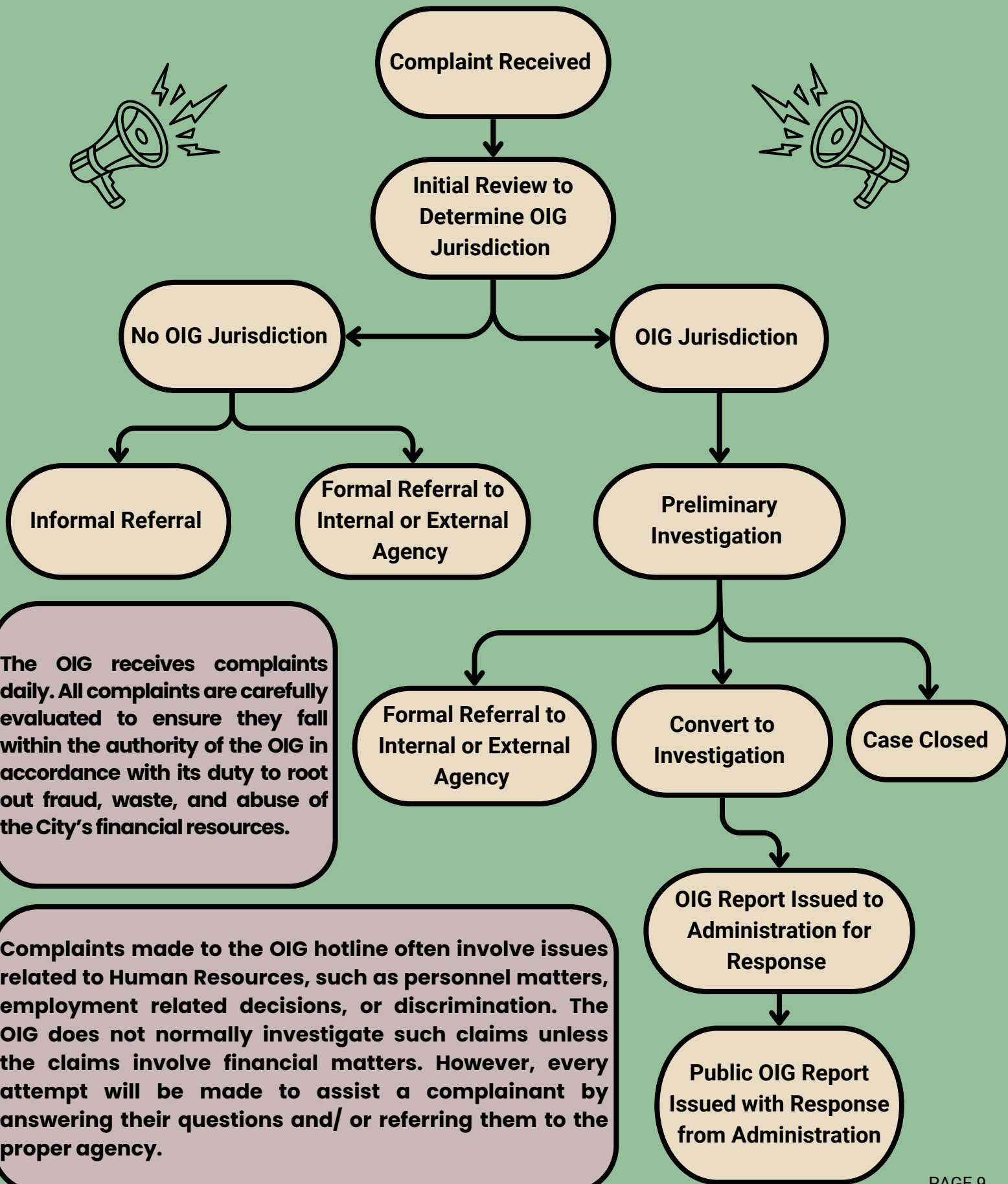
101

OTHERS (1%)

Complaints received from Federal, State, and Local partners outside the City of Baltimore.

7

Filing a Complaint



NOTABLE CASES

\$7 MILLION BILL

The OIG received an anonymous complaint in October 2022 alleging the Housing Authority of Baltimore City stopped paying water bills in 2018 and owed the City millions of dollars. The OIG investigation showed one City employee was responsible for all consolidated water billing for the City's master accounts, including the account for HABC. The OIG identified 1,207 delinquent HABC accounts with a total past due amount of almost \$11.8 million. In May 2023, the OIG found that 186,350 water service accounts owned by several customers were delinquent. Combined with HABC's unpaid bills, the City was owed nearly \$319.2 million. In June 2023, HABC owed just under \$7.9 million. The OIG also found there was a disconnect between the City's internal records and data made publicly available. The City informed the OIG in 2023 it was forming a collections team to obtain money owed for water service.



ELECTION \$\$ WASTED

In March 2023, the OIG received a complaint alleging that the City's telephone service department, Telecom, failed to suspend service for cell phones used by the Baltimore City Board of Elections after the 2022 election cycle ended. As a result, Telecom paid the City's phone service provider a total of more than \$33,500 for service provided between January and March 2023. Despite Telecom's past practice of automatically suspending phone lines following elections, Telecom told the OIG phone service continued because the elections board did not request to suspend it. The OIG investigation prompted Telecom to suspend phone service and receive a credit of more than \$41,200.



NOTABLE CASES

GHOST HOURS

The OIG investigated a complaint alleging that a Department of Public Works supervisor was falsifying overtime hours to receive pay for hours they did not work. The complaint further alleged the supervisor attended church on Sundays during their scheduled overtime work hours and returned shortly before their shift ended. The OIG confirmed details of the complaint, finding the supervisor left the workplace more than one hour before the end of their overtime shift at least 51 times between May and October 2022. The investigation also found that key security cameras in a City building were broken.



SUN, SAND, AND SETTLEMENT

In October 2023 the OIG investigated a complaint alleging the City owed money to a retired Baltimore Police Department officer for approximately 114 days of unused vacation leave. The officer, who retired November 2019 after serving 32 1/2 years, was advised they would be paid out for the unused leave. The officer went four years without receiving the approximately \$40,800 they were owed. In December 2023 following the investigation, the OIG notified the officer that the City issued them a check for the due amount.



NOTABLE CASES



FURNITURE FUMBLE

The OIG investigated a complaint alleging that a Department of Transportation supervisor allowed an employee to take City furniture home for personal use. The complaint alleged the employee sustained an injury while transporting the furniture. The OIG learned that the employee claimed to have sustained the injury while transporting a broken chair between two City buildings during a department relocation over the course of a few months in 2022 and 2023. The employee claimed the chair fell as they tried loading it onto a vehicle. The supervisor confirmed they gave the employee permission to take an extra desk chair home for personal use. The chair remains unaccounted for, and the supervisor received counseling due to their failure to adhere to Administrative Manual policies. The Transportation department subsequently scheduled training for all division chiefs, manager, and other representatives regarding the Administrative Manual policies to ensure the proper handling of expendable items.



DOUBLE COLLISION

The OIG confirmed details of an anonymous complaint that a City employee was involved in two City vehicle accidents in May and June 2023 during work hours. The employee was operating vehicles loaned to the Mayor's Office by the Baltimore City Fire Department. In the May accident, the employee stated they were struck by another driver who ran a stop sign. The following month, the employee struck the mirror of a parked car, causing damage to both vehicles, which required the City vehicle to be towed. The employee did not undergo required drug and alcohol testing after an accident. All City employees must attend Risk Management's Defensive Driver's course to obtain a city of Baltimore Driver Permit. Policies and other post-accident requirements are reviewed during this course. While the employee obtained a valid City driver permit, the investigation revealed they violated the City's Motor Vehicle Accident policy by failing to report to the City's drug testing provider following the accident. The Mayor's Office informed the OIG that they provided the employee and their supervisor with the City's vehicle accident policy in reference to the case.

SALARY HOAX

The OIG investigated a complaint alleging that a Department of Public Works employee submitted a fraudulent job offer letter to management to receive a counteroffer and negotiate a higher salary. The Public Works employee confirmed the letter they provided was fraudulent and explained they had wanted a 10% pay raise. Public Works terminated the employee.

NOTABLE CASES

LONG LOST PENSIONS

The City of Baltimore Employees' Retirement System (BCERS) manages the Retirement Savings Plan (RSP) for City employees and eligible Baltimore City Public Schools employees. RSP-eligible City Schools employees hired on or after July 1, 2014, are required to contribute 5% of their annual base pay, and City Schools are required to match their contributions. The OIG received a complaint alleging that as of July 2023, City Schools had failed to pay retirement contributions for 572 RSP-eligible employees hired between 2014 and 2021 - resulting in more than \$5 million of missed employee deductions and employer contributions. The complaint also alleged that BCERS had alerted City Schools' senior management about the issue several times since 2019. Evidence found in the OIG investigation supported the complaint allegations. An audit of fiscal year 2022 showed that 572 City School employees who were enrolled in RSP had zero contributions. Multiple witness statements established that as early as 2019, City Schools' leadership team members were aware of the issues with RSP enrollment, having received written notifications regarding the issue in January 2020, December 2022, and July 2023. In September 2023, BCERS notified City Schools the total amount of missed employee and employer contributions due was nearly \$5.2 million for 474 employees. The same month, City Schools wired the total amount of missed contributions to BCERS to cover the affected employees and waived reimbursement of missed contributions for all affected employees.

NOTABLE CASES



VANISHED CHECKS

In January 2023, the City Law Department alerted the OIG to three workers' compensation paychecks that were never received by the law firm to which they were issued. The Law Department alleged the checks were fraudulently deposited into an unknown individual's bank account. The OIG learned the Law Department's works' compensation vendor wrote out three checks to the law firm between December 2021 and February 2022 in the amounts of \$3,237.50, \$1,483.36, and \$3,827.63. The City's Bank also requested investigation of the transactions by the bank of the individual suspected to have stolen the checks. The OIG subpoenaed bank statements in the suspect's name and found records of online deposits for all the checks into their banking account. However, the investigation did not find evidence to connect the suspect to the City, the workers compensation vendor or the law firm - leading law enforcement to believe the increase in U.S. mail theft could potentially have been the reason for the missing checks. The OIG referred the case and provided investigation findings to law enforcement for potential criminal investigation.



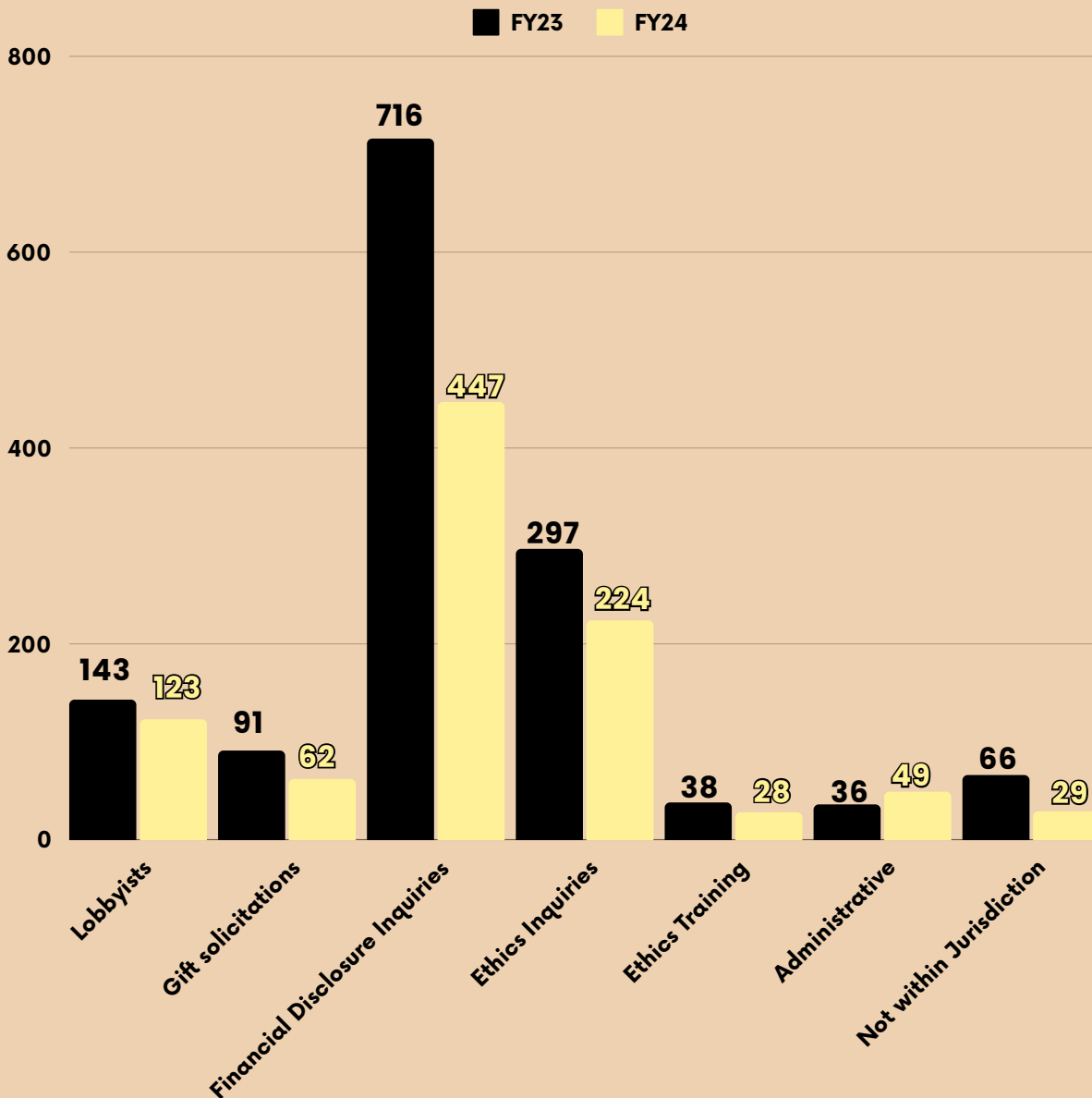
FAILURE TO INVOICE

The Office of the Inspector General received a hotline complaint alleging the City failed to invoice an independent company for 152 Right-of-Way permits between 2019 and 2023, totaling roughly \$245,300. The OIG investigation revealed the City had failed to invoice the company for the permits for the alleged amount. A review of the company's permit applications showed permits listed with the company's address, but not their own name. The Bureau of Accounting and Payroll Services stated when billing the company on permit applications, they do not review the address. The company informed the OIG in August 2023, that they confirmed receipt of numerous bills but claimed approximately 64 were outstanding, totaling slightly over \$130,200 due to Baltimore City.

Board of Ethics

The Ethics Board is an independent body comprised of five members that oversee the Ethics Law, contained in Article 8 of the City Code. The Ethics Law ensures that officials and employees serve the public with fairness and independence by guarding against conflicts of interest and other improper conduct connected with City employment. The Ethics Law governs lobbyist registration and activity in the City. The Inspector General serves as the ex officio Executive Director of the Ethics Board and designates an Ethics Director, Ethics Officer, and Special Assistant to the staff of the Board. The Board and its staff are committed to carrying out all of the Board's important duties, including investigating ethics complaints, promoting awareness of the Ethics Law, overseeing the financial disclosure and lobbying systems and processes, and answering all ethics-related questions from City officials, employees, and members of the public.

FY24 Ethics Highlights Helpdesk Requests by Category



935
FY24 Total Requests

1,314
FY23 Total Requests

30
Ethics Complaints

1
Advisory Opinion

Contact Us



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