

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
OFFICE OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2025**





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A Message from the Inspector General

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

As we begin this historic second term as the Inspector General of Baltimore City, I want to thank my team for their hard work, my citizen-based Advisory Board for their steady leadership under Chairperson Gayle Guilford, and most of all the public for their unwavering belief in this Office. The Office of Inspector General (OIG)'s success is due to the public – this Office works for the citizens of Baltimore City, and that fact is the cornerstone of our mission.

The public provides the hotline complaints that move the Office forward. This year started with a hotline complaint by a Department of Public Works (DPW) worker that culminated in seven different OIG reports. The OIG interviewed over 130 Solid Waste workers, listening to their concerns. The two final DPW reports issued by the OIG were on the existing culture of DPW and on the tragic passing of DPW worker Ronald Silver II.

After the issuance of those reports, the City Council held hearings so the public could hear firsthand from the workers about the neglect that has existed unchecked for years by supervisors, employees, and their union. The OIG will continue to monitor DPW in the coming years.

In addition to the team's focus on DPW, the OIG issued reports involving Recreation & Parks, the Department of Finance (DOF), the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS), the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), the Employee Assistance Program, the Health Department, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE), the Baltimore City Office of Information Technology (BCIT), and the Fire Department. The amount of identifiable waste or savings was \$10,900,000 this year.

Baltimore City's citizen-based Advisory Board has become the gold standard, with Baltimore and Howard Counties putting in similar legislation to achieve independence with their Offices of Inspector General. Lastly, I continue to serve for a second term as the 1st Vice President of the Association of Inspectors General. Thank you for allowing me the great honor to continue to serve as your Inspector General.

Yours in accountability,



Isabel Mercedes Cumming



Our Mission

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 polices itself and initiates improvements in operational efficiency. The OIG contributes to these objectives through impartial and independent investigation.



Investigative Code

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 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.



2025 Highlights

103

OIG referrals
made to other
agencies

35

OIG reports
issues year to
date

72

OIG outreach
activities year to
date

\$10.9M

Identified Financial
Impact Year To Date

38

Active
Cases

24

Pending
Cases

Budget History

2025

\$2,663,158
18 Positions

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

FISCAL YEAR 2025 HOTLINE COMPLAINT STATISTICS

COMPLAINTS SUMMARY	898	526	246	118	8
	Total complaints received	From citizens	From anonymous/ confidential informants	From City of Baltimore Employees	Others

27% of complaints come from individuals whose identities are unknown to the OIG or those who elect not to disclose their identities to the public. This may include elected officials, employees, contractors, or citizens

59% complaints from individuals and businesses that are interested in Baltimore City and its operations

13% of complaints are from individuals working in or for a City of Baltimore agency

1% of complaints received are from Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement partners

Return on Investment

What is the cost for each resident of Baltimore City in relation to our Budget? \$4.63 per person
OIG FY25 Budget
\$2,663,158 divided by the population of Baltimore City, 575,000. The same cost as an MTA Round Trip Pass. **\$0.68 cheaper than last year!**



The OIG serves a city with a workforce of almost 14,000 employees and is home to 575,000 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 and Certification by the Association of Fraud Examiners as a certified Fraud Examiner will be afforded to OIG investigators at the discretion of the Inspector General. With almost 900 hotline calls and each agent carrying between three to five active cases, the challenge of addressing all investigations promptly 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 with subpoena power, 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, however the OIG also conducts criminal investigations in cooperation with our law enforcement partners when appropriate.

Whistleblower

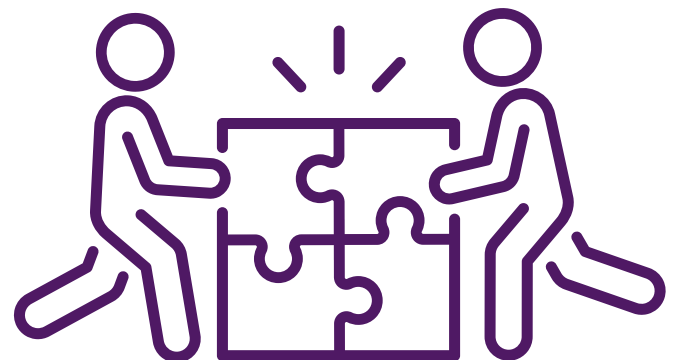
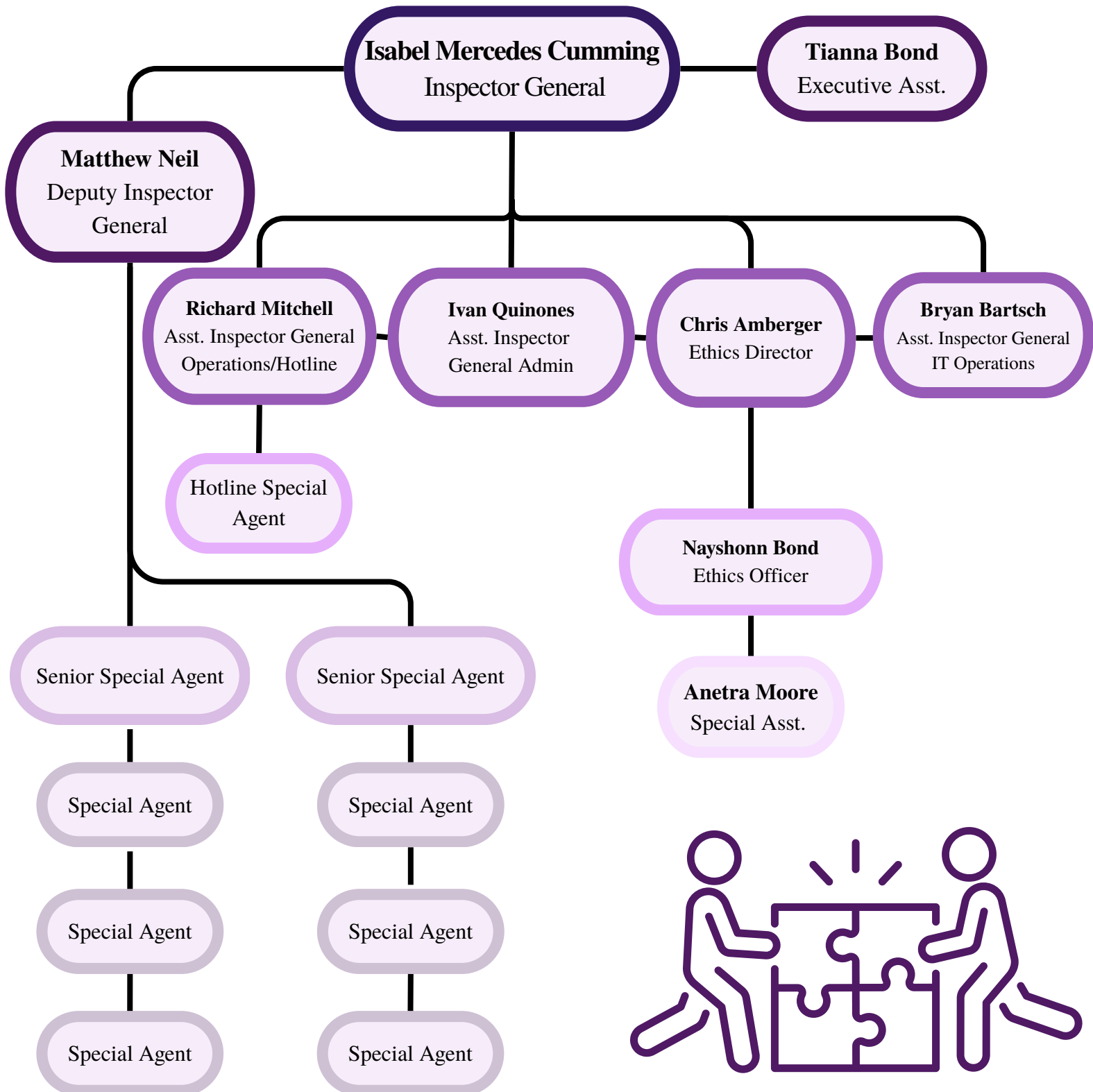
The Whistleblower Rights and Responsibilities Act went into effect on March 15, 2020. This law protects any City employee who makes a covered disclosure related to fraud, gross misuse or waste of public resources, violations of law, and abuse of authority. The scope of the covered disclosure is not limited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

Ethics

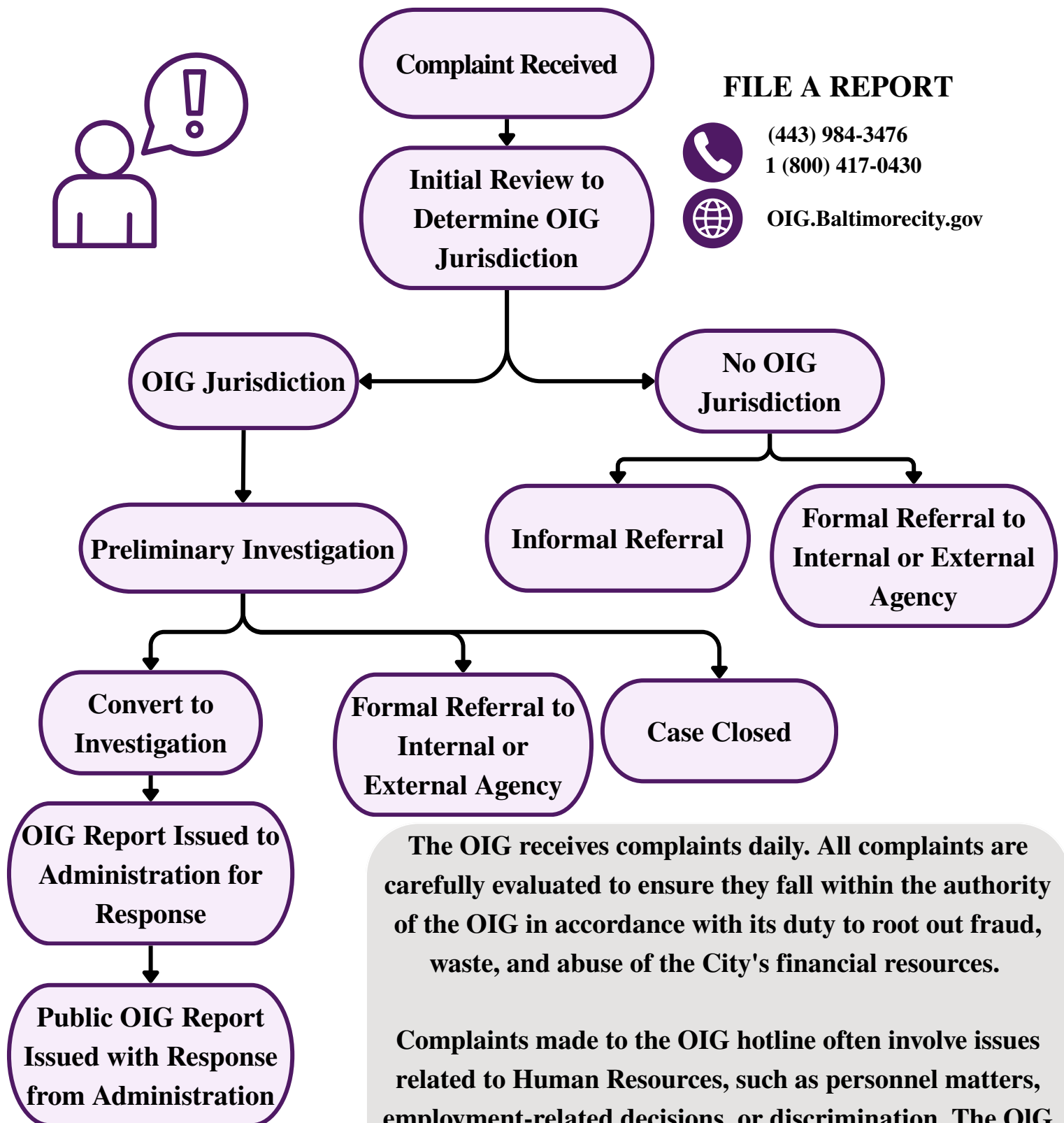
In April of 2020, the Baltimore City Council voted for the Office of the Inspector General to become the Executive Director of the Baltimore City Board of Ethics. The Ethics Board is an independent entity that oversees the Baltimore City Public Ethics Law in Article 8 of the City Code. The Ethics Law ensures Baltimore City officials and employees serve the public with fairness and impartiality 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 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.

OLG Organizational Chart



Filing a Complaint



The OIG receives complaints daily. All complaints are carefully evaluated to ensure they fall within the authority of the OIG in accordance with its duty to root out fraud, waste, and abuse of the City's financial resources.

Complaints made to the OIG hotline often involve issues related to Human Resources, such as personnel matters, employment-related decisions, or discrimination. The OIG does not normally investigate such claims unless the claims involve financial matters. However, every attempt will be made to assist a complainant by answering their questions and/or referring them to the proper agency.

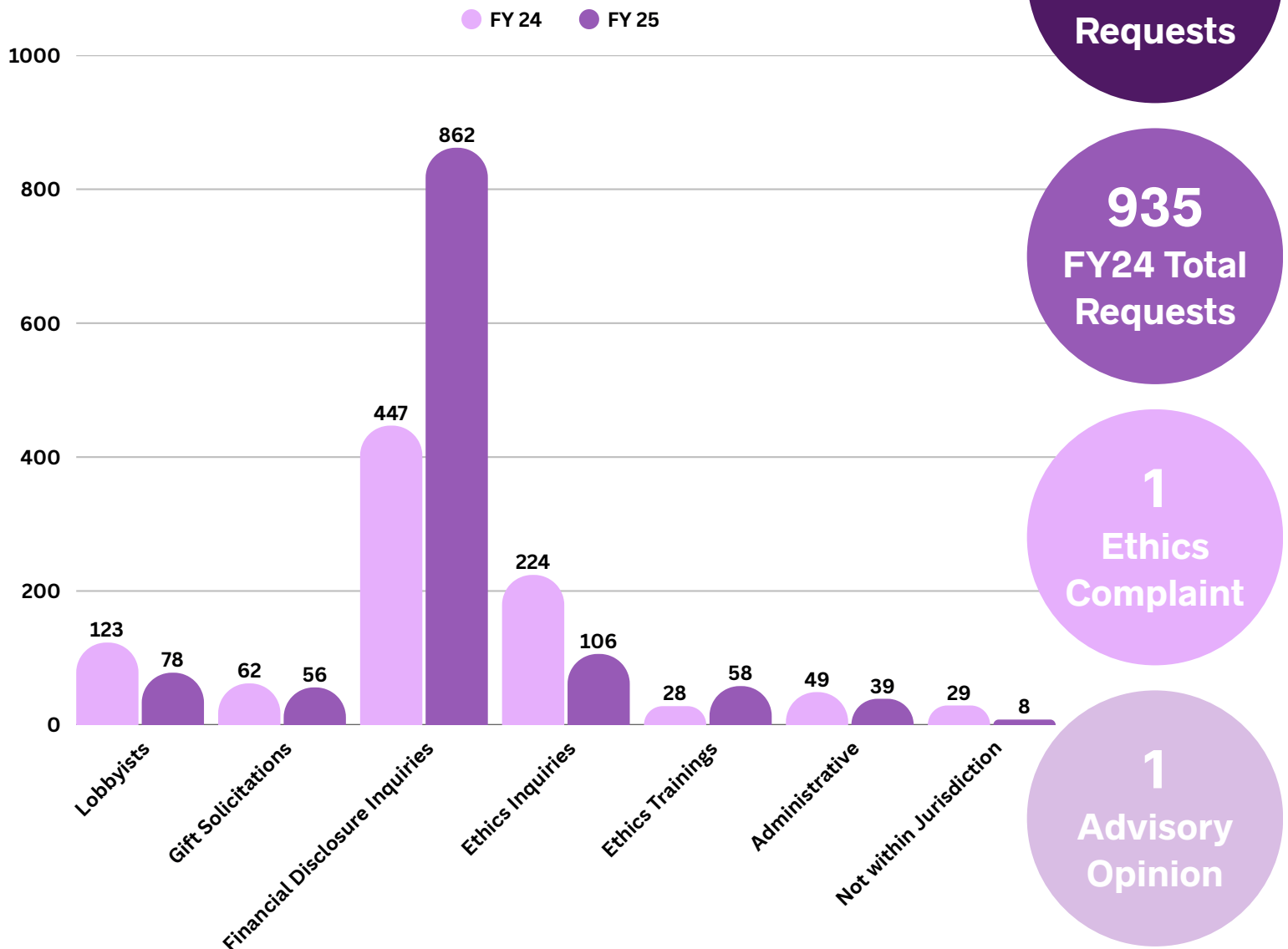
Board of Ethics

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 within 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 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. One Ethics Board position selected by the Mayor has remained open for two years.

Fiscal Year 25

Ethics Highlights

Helpdesk Requests by Category



CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD



Gayle Guilford

Chairperson



James Godey

Secretary
(Certified Public Accountant)



LaVonda Reed

Dean of University of
Baltimore School of Law



**Renée
Hutchins Laurent**

Dean of University of
Maryland School of Law



Raymond White

Certified Fraud Examiner

CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD



Brittany Banks
Member



Gary Williams
Member



Lauren DiMartino
Member



Micheal Dowd
Member



Alan Garten
Member

Department of Public Works

NOTABLE CASES

INADEQUATE WORKING CONDITIONS

The OIG received a complaint stating that the Department of Public Works (DPW) does not properly supply employees with water, ice, and fans. Site visits revealed broken ice machines, no air conditioning (in temperatures of 80° to 90°F), and no electrolytes available. During the visit, the OIG observed no working water fountains, trash cans full of melted ice and warm water bottles, and a missing thermostat in the employee locker room, which was hot and humid with no cool airflow. The cold-water faucet had hot water coming out of it. There was no toilet paper in the men's restroom. An industrial fan was present, but it had no cool airflow and was blowing at low speeds. DPW employees were told that the main trailer would be used as a cooling station; however, the central AC had stopped working three weeks earlier and was replaced by three smaller AC units. Only two AC units were plugged in because using all three would blow the power. Temperatures in the trailer were recorded at 83°F and 85°F at 7 a.m. before the daily temperature rise. After the initial report, the OIG received more complaints and completed site visits to 9 other DPW facilities. The OIG found issues at multiple sites including inadequate air conditioning, significant damage and disrepair, and no toilet paper in bathroom stalls readily available for Bowley's Lane employees among other issues.

UNCLAIMED INSURANCE

The OIG learned that over 136 workers in the DPW Bureau of Solid Waste (BSW) were not enrolled in City health insurance coverage and were not registered for the \$2,500 waiver credit the City provides if they have insurance coverage elsewhere. The 136 employees represent approximately 20% of the BSW workforce. According to numerous employees, they reported receiving brief or no information about benefits during orientation and expressed issues with using Workday. Upon hire, city employees have 45 days to enroll in benefits. After those 45 days, they must wait for the next yearly enrollment period. The OIG worked with DPW to inform employees about their health benefits and waiver options. This included the Inspector General texting the identified employees about their health insurance options and benefits fair that DPW held. As a result, over 100 employees signed up for the City's health insurance.

INJURY REPORTS OMITTED

During an ongoing investigation, it was found that DPW left out information from reports requested by the OIG. Risk Management provided records of 26 employees with reported heat-related illnesses, DPW's spreadsheet only showed 16, and 10 reports were left out. Among the omitted reports, employees described symptoms like lightheadedness, dehydration, blackouts caused by heat, dizziness, vomiting, heat stroke, fainting, chafing due to excessive heat, and cramping. 6 of the 10 reports happened on days when temperatures were 90° F or more, with two occurring on a 103° day. These six results were listed as syncope (fainting or passing out). DPW responded that this should not have occurred and should have provided the information received without omission.

Department of Public Works

NOTABLE CASES

WORK CULTURE

DPW employees complete physically demanding labor that is essential to the operation of Baltimore City. The OIG reviewed the total work experience of DPW solid waste workers and drivers. The investigation revealed that funding has been dedicated to improving facilities, but due to a higher estimate the funding for a proposed Bowley's Lane Transfer Station had not been solidified. The investigation revealed operational issues including 83% of City trash routes were above the industry standards of 950 stops per route, lack of proper staffing, lack of feedback from employees on equipment and supplies. The OIG noted additions of new vehicles to DPW's fleet that replaced older, outdated trucks. A review of injury data from 2019 to 2024 found that 1,627 BSW employees reported a work-related injury. Workers believed their supervisors did not support them, care for their safety, handle injuries properly, and were unwilling to assist. A lack of performance evaluations and comprehensive job training programs was found for employees and front-line supervisors. Solid waste employees face extreme weather, hazardous situations, and high injury risk. Many workers mentioned the lack of information and representation from the union. Nearly all employees interviewed expressed that they deserve to be paid more than their starting pay of \$40,669 and hazard compensation of only 15¢ per hour.



RONALD SILVER II

While the OIG was investigating and issuing reports regarding the complaints within the DPW Bureau of Solid Waste (BSW), Solid Waste Worker Ronald Silver II (Silver) died due to heat exhaustion on August 2nd. The investigation revealed that he was on a route with 1,153 stops (180 more than the industry standard). The heat index for August 2nd reached 108 °F. Workers explained that temperatures are 10° to 20° hotter behind the truck. The OIG learned that Silver fell in an alley towards the end of the route, and a DPW Supervisor or medical personnel were not notified. Silver was then brought back to his vehicle, where he stumbled onto a citizen's porch and knocked on the door for help. The citizen came out, saw that Silver was in distress, and began to pour water on him. The citizen made multiple calls to 911. The citizen and a neighbor helped Silver sit up, and the dispatcher told them to do chest compressions. While they were doing so, the paramedics arrived and took Silver to the hospital, where he was later pronounced deceased.

NOTABLE Cases

UNSAFE AND UNSANITARY

The OIG received a complaint about unsafe and unsanitary conditions at the Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP) location on Washington Blvd. Many of the workers assigned to this site are laborers or maintenance employees and work outside of the building. The OIG noted that the facility had an ongoing rodent infestation, and the employees did their best to clean up after the rodents. They also noted that the entrance of the office building had missing floor tiles, in the staff break area, the lights were not working, ceiling tiles were missing, the door panels as well as windows were broken, and there was exposed electrical wiring and ceiling insulation. The facility's Maryland Department of Agriculture Pesticide Public Agency Permit, as well as its Certificate of Inspection were both expired in 2015 and 2017. To wash off pesticides, inside the building is a shower for employees, but the OIG noted that the shower was inoperable. The exit door from the break room was blocked, and there was another door with a missing handle and a padlocked exterior. In the back of the building, there were dozens of used tires, empty water containers, and a leaking hose. In an unlocked garage, there was mildew on the ceiling and equipment left susceptible to theft or vandalism.

ZELLE AND THE CITY

In September 2023, the Department of Justice (DOJ) provided information to the OIG regarding allegations that an employee of the Department of Finance (DOF) was accepting payments from customers in exchange for discounts and extensions on their tax sale redemptions via payment app Zelle. The OIG discovered that the employee did, in fact, accept payments and found discrepancies in their redemption paperwork. The OIG found over 50 instances where the employee forwarded sensitive tax sale documents, including bills, deeds, screenshots, and check scans, to their personal email address. DOJ's investigation of the criminal matter resulted in a guilty plea. The OIG additionally found there was a lack of audit logs and security features in the DOF mainframe. In response, DOF is in the process of implementing a new system with additional security features. The employee was incarcerated by the DOJ for four years for this and other frauds.

FRADULENT FUEL CARD



The OIG received a complaint alleging fraud using a fuel card issued to a former Baltimore Police Department (BPD) officer. After their employment ended in 2022, approximately 429 gallons of fuel were estimated to have been purchased for \$1,903.07. The card was used 30 times after their separation. The OIG attempted to find footage at gas stations, but none of the stations saved the footage. Due to the length of time between the transactions and the complaint, the OIG was unable to identify the person responsible, but the OIG recommended that BPD update its property return form to include all department-issued property. BPD implemented additional internal fuel card policies.

NOTABLE Cases



FUNDS RECAPTURED



The OIG received a complaint that alleged that the City of Baltimore had to return \$10 million of grant funding to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) is responsible for providing services to families at risk or facing homelessness. HUD offers awards to MOHS on an annual basis. An OIG investigation revealed that of \$25 million in award funding, HUD identified more than \$10 million to be recaptured. The investigation revealed and MOHS confirmed that the amount taken back was made up of approximately \$5.9 million that the City had given out without completing drawdowns for reimbursement from HUD, and \$4.9 million that the City never spent. HUD approved a MOHS request for an extension to complete the drawdowns, and the City requested reimbursement for the \$5.9 million. The reasons for rare drawdowns were reported to be significant employee turnover and lack of standard operating procedures. From 2021 to 2023, around 56 employees left MOHS. Witnesses reported there was a lack of knowledge passed down when previous employees left, and new employees would start. Additionally, the OIG learned that MOHS had to return \$501,684.12 due to HUD's monitoring report finding very few drawdowns, ineligible expenses, and problems with payments to subrecipients. The OIG recommended that MOHS continue to review ways to maximize HUD funding to reduce potential recapture of funds, including those resulting from underspending. MOHS' response included an additional policy in place to minimize the slow spending of grant funds.

NOTABLE Cases



MEAL SERVICE MAYHEM



An investigation by the OIG found that the City overpaid \$460,920 for meals at a homeless shelter because both the shelter vendor and the hotel owner were paid for the same meals. The City had a contract with a hotel owner to rent 123 rooms from their hotel and provide 3 meals daily, charging \$6 per meal. However, after the shelter provider changed its meal service provider, both the vendor and the hotel invoiced the City for the meals. Records showed the City paid both the shelter vendor \$643,220.10 and the hotel owner \$460,926 for the same meals. Miscommunication, staff turnover, and confusion led to the mistake. The hotel owner is no longer working with the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS), and the City updated its policies to prevent similar situations. The OIG has turned over the case to the City's Law Department.

FICTITIOUS EMPLOYEES



The OIG received several complaints stating that the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement's (MONSE) Safe Streets Program contracts included fake employee names and were provided to the Board of Estimates (BOE) on the contract approval papers. Investigations found that MONSE employees sent out multiple emails to contractors using fake employee names for contracts submitted and later approved by the BOE. The OIG then found 26 names that could not be verified. Additionally, the OIG could not find any relevant records to prove that 9 employee names were real people. The OIG gave their findings to law enforcement and recommended that MONSE and Audits meet to review the best ways to submit contracts to the BOE when there are empty positions available. The OIG did not find evidence indicating that invoices with fictional names were paid.

NOTABLE Cases



CAUGHT SLACKING

An OIG investigation revealed that the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) and the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) were using Slack (a third-party communication platform), even though the City had officially transitioned to Microsoft Teams. MONSE claimed Slack was approved by BCIT for communicating with community members, but evidence showed it was used for internal messages. The City paid \$12,156.43 for MONSE's Slack subscription from July 2021 to December 2024. BCIT staff were worried about third-party software like Slack, WhatsApp, and Signal, because of problems with accessing data, storage, and security. The OIG recommended that the City ban the use of these apps without BCIT approval and proper setup. Moreover, the Law Department should then be informed of third-party communication use to ensure effective responses to Maryland Public Information Act requests.

COMMUNITY IMPACT



The OIG is here to look out for the people of the City. The OIG's job is to make sure local government is working honestly, fairly, and responsibly for everyone. When the OIG investigates concerns of waste, fraud, and abuse, it's not just about fixing problems; it's about protecting Baltimore Citizens' tax dollars, supporting City workers, and helping Baltimore grow stronger. By working together with the community, the OIG aims to build trust and create a government that truly serves its residents!

Speaking out!

The OIG plays a critical role in ensuring accountability and fairness across public agencies. Recently at a City Council oversight hearing, DPW employees testified about safety concerns and workplace culture, shedding light on the challenges they face. By listening to workers and examining agency practices, the OIG helps protect both employees and the public, working to build a government that operates with integrity and respect for its workforce.



Inspectors Generals Unite!



In the state of Maryland, there are only three local Inspector Generals: pictured here, left to right, Kelly Madigan for Baltimore County, Isabel Mercedes Cumming for Baltimore City, and Megan Davey Limarzi for Montgomery County. Maryland's Inspectors General make it their goal to ensure the well-being of their local communities. Though they often face struggles and hardships in forms of political pushback or limited resources, they remain committed to promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency within local government operations. Inspectors General continue to serve as vital watchdogs for their communities!

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Baltimore City
Office of the
Inspector General



Annual Report produced by OIG Intern
Gabrielle Farrington



*This year's annual report is dedicated to
the memory of DPW Solid Waste
Worker, Ronald Silver II*

