



Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 3, 2020

Committee: House Judiciary

Bill: House Bill 166 - Criminal Procedure - Law Enforcement Procedures - Use of Force

Position: Oppose

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League opposes House Bill 166. This legislation defines “deadly force” and provides for scenarios in which deadly force may be used by a law enforcement officer. The bill also lays out criteria that triers of fact must consider when deliberating whether a law enforcement officers actions were reasonable.

A 1989 Supreme Court ruling established an “objective reasonableness” standard to which police officers are now held in confrontational scenarios. Understanding that in many instances these officers are required to make split-second decisions that carry heavy consequences in constantly evolving situations, the objective reasonableness standard seeks to view the event as it happened through the eyes of a reasonable officer with the same set of facts as were available at the time. It can be misleading to view the event, and the decisions that were made, based on information acquired after the incident.

The 90 or so municipal police agencies provide a valuable service to municipal residents but also carry a substantial responsibility. That being said, the gravity of police actions should not be lost in this debate and officers should be held accountable for their actions. Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission weaves de-escalation practices into its training of police officers in the State; training that is required of all officers and is an important tool for police officers.

Due to the bill’s alteration of the lens through which police actions are viewed, the League opposes House Bill 166 and respectfully requests that the committee report the bill unfavorably.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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