



January 17, 2021

Honorable Senator William Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2E
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB178 Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)

Dear Chair Smith and Senate Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 178 entitled **Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)**. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims.

In an era when public trust in law enforcement is a challenge, Maryland needs statewide standards for transparency regarding deaths that occur in police custody. This issue affects every community. Law enforcement officers have incredible power, and that power carries tremendous privilege. When a life is taken, it is permanent. That act cannot be undone. The families and loved ones who remain behind are left to grapple with the loss while struggling to understand whether this death could have been avoided.

At the conclusion of their training, officers take an oath to protect and serve, that oath should apply equally to every member of our communities; but sadly we know that is not the case. Too many people of all religious, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds have died while in police custody without sufficient information made available about the circumstances of their death or the officers involved in the incidents. Many questions still remain surrounding Anton Black's death in police custody in the Fall of 2019, after whom this bill is named.

This measure would allow for the public release of materials related to an investigation and any prior complaints against the officer involved. We have a responsibility, we owe it to the families still mourning their loved ones to get it right, and that requires establishing standards that will help ensure transparency and accountability, and inspire public trust in law enforcement agencies.

We support this bill and respectfully urge a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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