

January 21, 2021

Carol Stern

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

sterncss@gmail.com/(301) 951-3936



THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SBI 78/HB 120

Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Carol Stern, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Carol Stern and I live in Chevy Chase in District 16. I am co-chair of the Justice System Reform & Immigrant Rights Team of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ organizes more than 5,500 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local and state campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice. I am providing this testimony in support of Anton's Law, SBI 78/HB 120. We thank you for recognizing the urgent call of thousands of Marylanders, who have raised our voices in the streets asking for meaningful changes to policing to be passed during this legislative session.

Jewish tradition teaches us that destroying one life is akin to destroying the entire world. In a world already filled with so much violence, we must move to end police violence and change Maryland laws that prevent us from holding police accountable.

JUFJ has joined nearly 100 other organizations across Maryland, in the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability, calling on the General Assembly to pass five specific and impactful reforms. Reforming the Public Information Act to allow disclosure of all complaints of police misconduct is a key change needed to reform our justice system.

19-year-old Anton Black's death was the direct result of Officer Webster's excessive use of force - an officer with nearly 30 use-of-force complaints from prior incidents. Officers like Webster, with 10, 20, 30, or more complaints of misconduct, are only able to remain in their positions due to the shroud of secrecy covering their pattern of practice. Should SBI 78/HB 120 be passed, it would make publicly available the complaints against officers and would force chiefs

and commissioners who want to avoid public outrage to address it expeditiously. That increased accountability would reduce the likelihood of police abuse, violence, and even murder of the residents they are sworn to serve and protect.

Jewish tradition says that we are called to be partners in the creation of a more perfect world — in this time that call is louder than ever. Passing Anton’s Law is a step towards that more perfect world we must create together. **JUFJ respectfully urges a favorable report on SBI 78/HBI 20.**