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**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 4, 2021**

SB 626 – Law Enforcement Officers -- Use of Force

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Committee members,

My name is **Rev. Dr. Christopher L. Zacharias** and I live in **Silver Spring**, Maryland. I'm formally submitting my written testimony in support of SB 626 on Use of Force.

As you know, Maryland does not have statutory limits on use of force, and the Supreme Court cases fail to adequately protect the lives and safety of Maryland residents. Instead of merely codifying *Graham* and *Garner* into state law, we must elevate the “objectively reasonable” standard to prohibit officers from using force unless it is necessary as a last resort, under the totality of the circumstances, after the officer has exhausted de-escalation and other reasonable alternatives. Although there are other necessary components to a robust use of force statute, failing to change the legal standard will maintain the status quo and let officers remain unaccountable for the harm they cause.

Too much unaccountable actions of police officers have taken too many lives of people. In the case of the deceased, Mr. Robert White, again, unnecessary use of force, has caused Mr. White's death. An unarmed man, walking home, was falsely accused of a break in that he did not commit. However, on false suspicion and use of force, Mr. White's life is lost.

Since Mr. White's death, his church community and family have had the unnecessary grieving force of their emotional and spiritual well-being in turmoil of his life. I encourage and support this use of force bill to help for better policing and the stoppage of unnecessary use of force by any officer.

Too much time has passed for this bill to be enacted and for lives lost in the process. If we want a safer community, it must start with this bill, improved policing protocols, wiser officers and community leaders imploring to our community a safer and unified front for harmony among one another. This bill takes the necessary steps to help improve our police departments and their leading for a safer community for all.

Now is the time for a statewide use of force standard that holds officers accountable when they use unlawful force and ensures that officers will do everything they need to do in order to preserve human life. I urge a favorable vote on SB 626.

Attentively,
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