

January 19, 2021

RE: SB 178
Maryland Senate / Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD. 21401
Attn: Judicial Proceedings

Support for SB 178 – Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers.

Good day members.

I am writing to you today to support of increasing transparency in government through the use of the Public Information Act.

Our police officers are public servants to all of us, and they are in service to the law that they swear to uphold. Recent cases of abuses within police departments have given many of us reason to pause and reconsider the level of transparency around law enforcement policies, procedures and officer training.

As part of their roles as officers of the law, there is also laws in place that protect the citizenry from abuses of the system by the members of law enforcement. A greater level of transparency should be part of this process under the Maryland's Public Information Act laws.

I support greater levels of transparency under Maryland's Public Information Act. The phrase, we can't fix it unless we know it is broken no longer applies. We know that the system is broken. Citizens should be able to request, and be granted access to records associated with investigations, and administrative review processes of officer actions deemed worthy of investigation, by the checks and balances in a law enforcement agency's chain of command. As well as by a duly appointed civilian authority.

As citizens, this is how we enact change into the policing of our communities. We want better police procedures and transparency, we want better trained police officers, and we want safer communities. By working together with our police departments, we can make the system of community policing better and safer for all. This change is one step in the right direction of greater transparency and accountability to one's community which our officers have sworn to protect.

We hope that we can count of the members support for these changes to the Public Information Act and police policies.

Please vote in favor of SB 178.

Thank you for your considering my testimony today.
Mr. Richard Ceruolo