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Baltimore, Maryland  
District 8

Testimony in Support of Bill SB0626, Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force  
To: Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
From: Arielle Juberg

My name is Arielle Juberg. I am a resident of Baltimore County in District 8. I belong to Showing Up for Racial Justice in Baltimore. I also attend a church and volunteer at several non-profits in the Baltimore area.

I am testifying in support of SB0626, Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force. The General Assembly needs to establish a use of force policy for Maryland law enforcement. The state is part of a small group - only 9 states- that do not have a statewide use of force law.

This legislation presents our state with the opportunity to clearly define lethal and non-lethal force and specify that lethal force should only be used when all reasonable alternatives have been exhausted. I am particularly thankful that the law specifies that the least amount of force should be used when interacting with pregnant persons, children and youth, people with limited English proficiency, persons of color, and people with mental, behavioral, or developmental disabilities or impairments.

I, like many Marylanders, have been nervous during some police interactions. Too many of us have witnessed firsthand or seen videos of situations that escalated dramatically and involved lethal force. While I may feel unease, I recognize that many people, including people of color, experience this very real fear with every police interaction. Additionally, I cannot imagine the confusion and apprehension that people with limited English and people with developmental disabilities would feel when interacting with an officer in a high-stress environment. I hope that you will also put yourself into their shoes and imagine how this situation could spiral out of control.

Our society has entrusted law enforcement officers with lethal weapons that can take away someone's life. This power must be balanced with clearly defined limits on when it can be used. For all these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report for Bill SB0626.