



SB178 -- Support

Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton’s Law) Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Tara Dunderdale, I am a resident of Montgomery County and I am testifying on behalf of the Silver Spring Justice Coalition asking you to remove police misconduct complaints from the personnel record category.

The Spring Spring Justice Coalition (SSJC) is a coalition of community members, faith groups, and civil and human rights organizations from throughout Montgomery County. We envision a state and county where community and individual needs for safety are met while harm by police is eliminated.

Treating misconduct complaints as personnel records obscures crucial information from our communities about the police in our neighborhoods. It erodes public trust in the police, particularly in light of the fact that without civilian community oversight police are unwilling or unable to deal with issues of misconduct among their ranks.

Communities cannot trust police when they hide cases of misconduct from public view. Communities cannot trust armed officers who have free reign to abuse their power with no public accountability. If police departments are in fact investigating and handling cases of misconduct in a thorough way, then there is no reason to hide these cases behind bureaucratic semantics; but we know from history that they are not, and thus this legislation is crucial.

As a parent, I am explicit in teaching my child to not trust police officers, because the police in Montgomery County and around the country have demonstrated that they will not root out abuses of power on their own. This reform improves transparency and could help build community trust in police. Police in Maryland should not be allowed to continue to obfuscate their abuses of power when so many other states are making misconduct complaints accessible to the public.

Silver Spring Justice Coalition supports SB 178, Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton’s Law), and urges a favorable committee report.

Tara Dunderdale, EdD. 1020 Gilbert Rd. Rockville, MD 20851. (301)-251-2347. tara.dunderdale@gmail.com