

January 19, 2021

Testimony in Support of SB0043 – Criminal Law – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition of Criminal Activity

Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I submit this testimony in support of SB0043 as a youth group leader, mediator, former community leader, and a longtime Baltimore City resident.

During the past three years I have advocated on behalf of victims of police harassment, including victims of sexual harassment and assault. There is a pattern of misconduct within some Maryland law enforcement agencies of officers using their authority to create circumstances that victimize individuals, and then attempt to coerce sex or other benefits from that victim. In two cases, an officer responding to a call for service at a hospital emergency department attempted to use his position and authority to coerce a sexual relationship with the victim of a crime. In one case an officer escalated an incident, instead of de-escalating, making the victim even more vulnerable. Under current law, despite being vulnerable and under duress, those victims were not protected from sexual predation by the responding law enforcement officers.

While defendants detained by law enforcement are protected from sexual predation by law, victims, witnesses and others who call for assistance are not currently protected. I strongly urge you to support SB0043 to expand the current protection to victims, witnesses and others who call for assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Natasza Bock-Singleton,

President and Founder, Bloom and Grow