

Chris Apple
7001 Cradlerock Farm Court
Columbia, MD 21045
District 13

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Bill SB0178, Public Information Act - Personnel Records -
Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)

Jan 21, 2021

TO: Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Chris Apple

I am Chris Apple, I live in Columbia in District 13. This testimony is in support of Bill SB0178.

Police misconduct is an extremely serious accusation, suggesting that one of Maryland's public servants has violated their oath and caused harm to the public they are supposed to serve. Those accusations ought to be investigated with as much transparency as possible, so the public can observe and verify that the police department has upheld its duty to serve and protect. However, these investigation records are considered confidential personnel records, and many of them are never released to the public at all.

When a Marylander files a complaint of police misconduct, they cannot find out how the police investigate that complaint, or whether all due diligence was observed. Anton Black's family discovered this when Anton died at the hands of officers who used excessive force on him. His family pleaded with the police department for months for information, but the police did not release any. Governor Hogan finally got involved in tracking down the records, and he discovered the police had a long record of misconduct on these officers, and even body camera footage of Black's death which they were trying not to release.

I don't want Maryland to be a place where a family has to suffer like Anton Black's family did. No police department in Maryland should have the ability to withhold information about the misconduct of its officers. There should be a clear policy in place where this information is promptly released. The public deserves to know when an officer has violated his Oath to serve and protect. As the ACLU of Maryland said, "access to information from our government actors is the lifeblood of our democracy."

I respectfully urge you to support SB0178, to ensure all officers uphold their oaths, and to end the conflict of interest created by these protected records.