



## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Good afternoon Chairman Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am here today to present **HB707: Public Safety – Law Enforcement Reform**.

This is an omnibus bill, a cross-file of Senator West’s SB237, that seeks to implement statewide police reform based, primarily, off of legislation that was passed at the local level in Baltimore County in 2020. That legislation, proposed by Councilman Julian Jones, received bipartisan support in the County Council, receiving a 6 – 1 vote with two of the three Republican members of the Baltimore County Council joining their four Democratic colleagues. These reform measures were supported by County Executive Olszewski, the Fraternal Order of Police, the NAACP, labor unions and advocacy groups, Madam Speaker Adrienne Jones, and many others.

This bill takes on a number of issues that have been of sharp debate over the last few years. If passed, this legislation would:

- 1) Require no-knock warrants to be preapproved by a superior and the State’s Attorney’s Office;
- 2) Provide for annual training regarding interacting with individuals with physical, intellectual, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities;
- 3) Require annual training regarding anti-discrimination, implicit bias, and use-of-force de-escalation training;
- 4) Establish an early intervention system to identify officers at risk of engaging in excessive force, and to provide those officers with training, behavioral interventions, reassignments, and other response measures to reduce the risk of excessive force;
- 5) Require the chief of each law enforcement agency in Maryland to adopt certain rules to be followed by all of the agency’s law enforcement officers, including a requirement that each office must demonstrate the highest regard for the sanctity of human life and the dignity and value of all persons, as well as a rule that an officer may only use objective, reasonable, necessary, and proportional force to accomplish the officer’s lawful duties. It also requires the implementation of a rule that an officer shall, when safe and reasonably possible, use de-escalation techniques to proactively stabilize the situation so more time, resources, and options can be made available to gain voluntary compliance and reduce or eliminate the need to use force;
- 6) Require officers to intervene to prevent or terminate the use of excessive force by another officer;
- 7) Prevent retaliation via the use of an anti-retaliation measure so an officer may not retaliate against another officer who reports an intervention to prevent or terminate use of excessive force;

- 8) Require that an officer must report any use of physical force, or proactive instrument (including dogs), and must report if any person in custody is injured or states they are in pain. They must also report if a firearm is discharged, other than in training;
- 9) Provide that an officer may not use a neck hold, or other restraint, in order to restrict blood or air flow, except in defense against death or serious bodily injury.

HB707 also includes two additional measures, both of which are vitally important. First and foremost, this bill would see control of the Baltimore Police Department returned from the State to the City of Baltimore. For those unaware, the State took control of the Baltimore Police Department after the department had, for years, been used as a tool of the Know-Nothing Party, using violence and coercion to advance the party's agenda and keep them in power. The State having control over the Baltimore Police Department is a vestige of the past, and something that must be immediately remedied. For years the people of Baltimore have been crying out for police reform without a whole lot of say in what that reform may look like. It is high-time we returned that control to the Mayor of Baltimore and Baltimore City Council, and, in turn, the people of Baltimore.

Lastly, this bill would require that every law enforcement agency that employs over 20 officers shall require the use of body-worn cameras, the initial cost of which shall be equally split between the State and county or local municipality served by the agency implementing the program. The subsequent operating costs will then fall to the county or municipality operating the program.

These are relatively straightforward and common-sense provisions, but it is important that we implement this baseline statewide. If it was not clear before the events of last summer, it should be painfully apparent now that reform is needed. This legislation, which has received bipartisan support and the support of the Fraternal Order of Police and many activist groups, would be a very important step toward necessary reform.

I would like to thank you all for your time, as well as all of those who have provided written or oral testimony on behalf of HB707, and I urge a favorable report.