

HB0120 Cross-filed as SB0178 Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton’s Law)

Stance: Support

Testimony: My name is Adiena C. Britt from the 45th Legislative District in Baltimore City. I am writing to offer my full support for the passage of HB0120 through the House, as well as cross filed SB0178 in the Senate. I would like for this to pass through readers and be voted on by the full House and Senate and enacted into Law. My reading of this is that it amounts to amendments being created on the current MD Public Information Act. These amendments would allow for there to be greater transparency that is always being promised, but not delivered, by our various elected officials. Currently, civilian complaints of misconduct are considered part of an officer's "personnel record" in order to shield it from public scrutiny. It is nearly impossible to ascertain the depth of any given officer's misconduct and complaints against them in order for any true disciplinary action to take place. Many times, it's through community contact of abuse victims that the "dots are connected" and an officer's true nature can be gauged.

There are police officers in numbers, at the very least, in large double digits, who should be considered "criminal repeat offenders". These officers are not only currently still on the police force, but receiving promotions to higher ranks and are costing Baltimore City gigantic sums of money yearly in civil case payouts. I am positive the same could be said of other jurisdictions, especially Montgomery and Prince George’s counties who have similar issues as Baltimore City. The MPIA goes way beyond what any other person could expect as far as protections from their employer goes. Any other profession does not have the same privilege to accept and receive the same protections from misconduct accusations. This is in addition to the protections received by Law Enforcement via the LEOBR. This is one of two huge obstacles that are placed in front of civilians that suffer abuse at the hands of law enforcement officers, and it's time to change that. Knock down these walls! Pass this Legislation.

These amendments to the MPIA are necessary for every citizen of our fine state to be able to trust that justice will be served in any and all cases of misconduct; no matter what your profession happens to be. It is appalling that a profession that yields so much power and authority should be protected in such a way that there is no legal recourse but to sue the municipality that the officer works in. The MPIA requires amending in such a way, that there can be a fair and just way for citizens to be able to hold the "bad apples" accountable should they abuse the power they are afforded. There is no shortage of cases in every jurisdiction and I believe that if citizens of Maryland were able to get proper recourse, there would be less civil cases filed, and less money paid out for misconduct cases.

People only wish to see justice. Justice served out to the Police Officers like it is to every other citizen who commits a crime. There should be a means to properly investigate without vital information being withheld under the false notions that the information is protected somehow as a personnel matter, which is never fully handled by these departments, internal affairs, nor the State’s Attorney’s Offices. Please do the proper thing and allow this Bill to pass forward to a vote before the Full Senate and House of Delegates. Thank you.

Adiena C. Britt

6014 Old Harford Rd. Baltimore, MD 21214