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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL HB0139, Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force
Feb 9, 2021
TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee
FROM: Chris Apple

I am Chris Apple, I live in Columbia in District 13. This testimony is in support of Bill HB0139.

Between 2015 and 2019, there were almost 23,000 use of force incidents in Baltimore alone, a rate of about 12 per day.¹ Yet despite the prevalence of these incidents, Maryland is one of only nine states without a statewide use of force law. Use of force in Maryland is instead governed by two Supreme Court cases, which authorize use of force when it is “objectively reasonable.” They do not require officers to attempt to de-escalate the situation first, nor exhaust all non-violent options before using force. Without a state-wide policy, there is minimal guidance about how police officers are supposed to engage with suspects.

Maryland needs a Use of Force policy that meets international standards. HB0139 delivers a comprehensive solution that protects citizens from unnecessary violence. It will also protect officers from accusations of misconduct by giving them a clear policy for engaging with suspects. This bill requires deadly force be used only as a last resort, and only after attempted de-escalation and exhausting all other options.

I respectfully urge you to support HB0139, which will give Marylanders badly-needed protections and create a unified policy for police departments to follow.

¹ Spielberg, Joe. *Chasing Justice*. Baltimore, 2021.
<https://www.aclu-md.org/en/publications/chasing-justice-addressing-police-violence-and-corruption-maryland>