



SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS:

HB 670 -- Police Reform and Accountability Act of 2021

HB 139 – Law Enforcement Officers – Use of Force

HB 120 – Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton’s Law)

My name is David Marker. I reside at 7131 Willow Brook Way, Columbia MD, 21046. I am submitting testimony to support House Bills 670, 139, and 120 on behalf of the **Howard County Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC)** of the Jewish Federation of Howard County.

A fundamental belief of Judaism is justice Tzedek Tzedek, Tirdof (or justice, justice, shall you pursue, Deuteronomy 16:20). We should continuously work toward equity for all, by understanding and working to overcome obstacles that stand in the way. In that spirit, we submit this testimony urging support for police reform legislation.

We are at a unique time in Maryland history, where there is wide-spread support for addressing systemic racism throughout society. One of those systems crying out for reform is the police departments throughout the state. Now is the time to act. According to Amnesty International, since 2013 in Maryland 80 of the 128 people killed by the police are Black people. This rate is double the proportion of the state population that is Black.

HB 670: Police Reform and Accountability Act of 2021

HB 670 is a major step forward and has many important components which we support.

We must eliminate choke holds and neck restraints. Policeman Derrick Chauvin demonstrated how terrible this is with George Floyd who was already in handcuffs! We remember when Eric Garner said “I can’t breathe” and the NYC police didn’t stop their use of choke holds until he was dead, for reselling individual cigarettes.

We must strongly limit no-knock warrants, by raising the standard to “clear and convincing evidence.” Please amend HB 670 to collect and track data on where and how these warrants are used, similar to the tracking of SWAT teams on page 12 of HB 670. Are no-knock warrants only being used on minority suspects? Were the concerns that allowed the warrant found to be true (how good is their information)?

It is past time all police wear body cameras, this bill establishes the mandate and the wherewithal for implementation.

Establishing an Independent Investigative Agency to investigate police involved shootings and other physical force is excellent. In Howard County we have an excellent system for police-involved shootings where any shooting in Howard or Montgomery Counties is investigated by the other State's Attorney's office. HB 670 would expand that throughout the state and expand the range of incidents covered.

HB 139: Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force

Maryland is one of only 9 states without a Use of Force law. We prefer HB 139 over the version incorporated in HB 670 because it includes a "when necessary" standard for force. Please amend HB 670 to include the language of HB 139, or approve HB 139 instead. The language in both bills to require de-escalation and intervention to prevent fellow officers from violating rights are important language to include.

The community should be involved in setting standards for police conduct, rather than relying on standards fixed over 40 years ago. LEOBR must be repealed. Policemen should have all the rights against self-incrimination of other public servants, but no more than others.

HB 120: Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)

Finally, the Maryland Public Information Act (Anton's Law, HB 120) would make a public record of officer investigations. As Dr. King said, only light drives out darkness. You have the opportunity to shine light on officers who repeatedly abuse their powers. HB 120 is preferable to HB 671 in that it covers a wider range of charges and includes unsubstantiated charges, which will minimize the hiding of patterns of practice.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our testimony, please act now to make Maryland a safer, more humane place for all of us to live.

2/4/21