

SB0626 cross-filed with HB0139-Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force

Stance: Support

Testimony: My name is Adiena C. Britt and I am a constituent of Baltimore City District 45. I am writing to encourage the passage of Bills SB0626 & HB0139 regarding Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force. During the past 5 years, I have been making my way into various advocacy circles and have learned a lot about certain conduct that occurs out on our streets. One of the activities I partake in is tracking all cases of police misconduct that I manage to uncover via researching News and newspaper accounts, public facing reports, and various databases that were utilized by Baltimore City, but are now defunct.

There are alarming trends within our Police department that require being addressed once and for all. There are countless numbers of cases where police officers have gone above and beyond anything that should be considered reasonable use of force. Take the Summer of 2013 for instance. From May through July of 2013, the **same** band of officers; sometimes on a rotating basis, terrorized various citizens of the Northeast District. There were unwarranted traffic stops that escalated into assaults of varying degrees. Traffic stops that were conducted under false pretenses, merely because it appeared these officers participated in these activities as a sick kind of sport. The culminating encounter resulting in the death of Tyrone West. This band of rogue officers showed a clear pattern of escalating behavior that ultimately resulted in murder. That's the bluntest way to put it.

Police officers act as if a civilian is not allowed to inquire about the reason they're being stopped. When they know what their rights are and point them out, the officers choose to escalate the situation by becoming overly aggressive. There are documented cases over a large number of years of civilians being picked up and body slammed, picked up and dropped on their heads, pulled by their hair to the ground, hit with police radios, punched, kicked, teeth knocked out, ribs broken, sat upon, held in choke holds, given "rough rides" in police vans, being shot, being tased, being falsely arrested and driven to another jurisdiction and abandoned there, and even being placed in restraints and further assaulted without being able to defend their person. In addition to these, there have been thefts, home invasions, and more serious types of harassment. These encounters involve women, men, and children. They seem to have no discretion as to whom they accost. These are all unacceptable behaviors, and should not be the means to deal with a subject of a traffic stop. Nor because a person looked at a police officer "funny" and ran off. Nor because they are asking about the nature of their being stopped, or contesting the legality of such a stop. Citizens should not be subjected to a band of lawless people who are clearly being held above the law in our fine State, just because they wear badges.

It is imperative that legislation be passed to thwart these kinds of encounters so that trust can be restored within the community, and for justice and healing to take place. Without such verbiage being made into law, the police have the discretion to interpret "use of force" to their liking, often resulting in injuries up to and including death. How is that acceptable? Please allow this bill to move out of committee to be heard before the full Senate and House of Delegates.

Thank you.

Adiena C. Britt

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