



February 9, 2021

Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB139 – Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 139 entitled Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

Use of force by police officers is a contentious, but critical issue in the United States, currently spotlighted in a national debate following the high-profile murder of George Floyd in 2020. According to the Washington Post and the "Mapping Police Violence" Project, over 1,000 people were shot and killed by police in America in 2019.

While all fifty U.S. states have state and federal laws that fail to adhere to international standards for police force use, Maryland remains one of only nine states without laws prohibiting excessive use of force.

This issue predominantly impacts Black and Brown communities, and fosters fear and mistrust of law enforcement officers. Police brutality is not an isolated incident and too frequently leads to bodily harm and avoidable deaths. My organization has received multiple complaints from community members who report being reluctant to alert officers about concerns and incidents out of fear of repercussion to themselves and their loved ones.

Last year, an immigrant family moved from their home in Baltimore County after an alleged excessive use of force incident by an officer against their son as the mother aided him during a mental health crisis outside their own home.

It's past time that Maryland is added to the list of states that increase transparency and accountability for inappropriate use of force. This bill allows for the transition towards police reform, which mandates law enforcement officers to de-escalate situations, and respond with a measured approach in a manner that protects and preserves human life. **CAIR supports this bill and respectfully urges a favorable report on this measure. Thank you for your consideration.**

Sincerely,

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