

Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

February 9, 2021

HB 139 –Law Enforcement Officers--Use of Force

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Committee members,

My name is Dawn Dalton and I live in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. I'm formally submitting my written testimony in support of HB 139 on Use of Force.

I am the mother of a directly impacted victim of police brutality in Prince George's County and the same officers that violated and beat my son are known for this behavior. We need change now.

As you know, Maryland does not have statutory limits on use of force, and the Supreme Court cases fail to adequately protect the lives and safety of Maryland residents. Instead of merely codifying Graham and Garner into state law, we must elevate the "objectively reasonable" standard to prohibit officers from using force unless it is necessary as a last resort, under the totality of the circumstances, after the officer has exhausted de-escalation and other reasonable alternatives. Although there are other necessary components to a robust use of force statute, failing to change the legal standard will maintain the status quo and let officers remain unaccountable for the harm they cause.

Now is the time for a statewide use of force standard that holds officers accountable when they use unlawful force, and ensures that officers will do everything they need to do in order to preserve human life. I urge a favorable vote on HB 139.

Respectfully,
Dawn Dalton