

I am testifying in favor of HB 139– Law Enforcement Officers Use of Force

There has and still is the expectancy of use of force being the last resort when other means of stopping an imminent threat through de-escalation has failed. Unfortunately, there have been cases in which use of force becomes the first tool being used, with devastating outcomes. I have seen the news reports of officers indiscriminately using unnecessary force to apprehend suspects or harass individuals. The use of force issue is even more prevalent in officers responding to mental health and domestic calls. Other officers who are task with stopping an imminent threat are put into a situation where if one unnecessarily uses force, they are more than likely to pile on the use of force and not stop the action. In Baltimore City, there is the long history of unnecessarily forced being used, which did begin nor end with Freddie Gray; enough of those experiences made the news and were even outlined in the DOJ report.

There is not a standardized policy of when and how use of force should be executed. HB 139 can and shall be the policy applied-to create a pathway to better training at de-escalation, requiring intervention of officers if the policy is violated, and greatly reduce the fear, trauma, and expenses caused by the harm imposed. If the responsibility we want law enforcement to have is to protect and serve as opposed to brutalize and terrorize, this bill needs to be passed. Thank for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Charlene Rock-Foster
Baltimore City Resident