



**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 671 –
Public Information Act – Personnel and Investigatory Records –
Complaints Against Police Officers
Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2021**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work tirelessly throughout the entire Greater Washington area to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents, support our Jewish day schools and community centers, and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the entire Jewish community.

Enshrined in the fundamental text of our Jewish heritage, the Torah, is a recognition of the role of both those who adjudicate the law and those who enforce it in the structures of a society based on law and civility (Deut. 16:18). Our Jewish community looks upon those entrusted to enforce the law with both great respect and high expectation in keeping with the observation that police officers must be of the highest ethical order, so that they themselves will serve as good examples of following the law. We place enormous trust in the police to protect us against anti-Semitic incidents and our continued positive relations with law enforcement are essential for our continued safety and security. Nonetheless, the substantial number of high-profile deaths in recent years of members of the Black community at the hands of police and the impact of those incidents on Jews of color in our own community, have led us to believe that policing and public safety policy should be reformed through systemic change.

The JCRC believes police reform and accountability demand our attention. House Bill 671 requires a custodian to grant inspection of certain personnel records by the United States Attorney, the Attorney General, the State Prosecutor, or a State's Attorney. The Bill establishes that a record relating to a formal complaint of job-related misconduct made against a police officer is not a personnel record under certain provisions of the Public Information Act under certain circumstances. HB 671 also requires each law enforcement agency to annually submit certain information relating to use of force complaints to the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission and requires the Commission to post on its website and submit to the General Assembly certain information.

The JCRC recognizes the complex nature of the issues surrounding policing and law enforcement. The agency also understands the need to rethink the nature of public safety, including instituting better accountability, to improve community-police relations and build a more just society. For these reasons, we ask the Committee to give a favorable report on HB 671.