

**TO:** Chairman Luke Clippinger, Vice Chair Vanessa Atterbeary, and members of the Maryland House Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Betty G. Robinson, 2113 Dobler Ave, Baltimore, MD 21218

Oppose HB 1221 unless amended.

**Good afternoon members of the House Judiciary Committee,**

**My name is Betty Robinson and I have lived in Baltimore City for 48 years. I am currently a resident of the 43<sup>rd</sup> District. In these years, I have worked as a public health researcher and as a community organizer. I am a member of Baltimore Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) which is a member organization of the Campaign for Justice Safety and Jobs. With this testimony, I am urging you to oppose HB 1221 unless critical amendments expanding the disclosures allowed are added.**

I recently served for two years on the Civilian Review Board for Baltimore City as the representative of the Northeast District. This is the body, created by state law and appointed by the Mayor, that receives, discusses and decides complaints submitted by residents to hold police in Baltimore City accountable.

We had many cases come before us where the police officer's conduct under an excessive force complaint was sustained. Although the complainant receives information on how the Board decided in his/her case, it is difficult for the complainant to learn how or even whether the Baltimore City Police Department disciplined the officer. You also cannot find out if and what kind of an investigation the police department conducted. Imagine your surprise, after you have filed the complaint, and received the Board's determination of sustained, when you see the officer in your community repeating the same abusive behavior.

Conversely, if your complaint is not sustained by the Police Department or Civilian Review Board it is nearly impossible to know why and you and the

public have no way of learning more. In the case of the Civilian Review Board for Baltimore City, the public has been given a tool to oversee the BCPD – which creates the illusion of transparency and accountability. But neither this Board or the public are able to discover whether the complaints of the police misconduct have been thoroughly, seriously and objectively investigated in a non-biased fashion, which ones were investigated and which ones were not, or to learn the disciplinary outcome.

Here are the amendments for the not sustained category which I feel should be added to HB 1221 for it to be supported by the community:

1. All use of force investigations, regardless of whether it causes death or serious bodily injury;
2. All discrimination or bias misconduct, not only “prohibited discrimination” as the bill currently states;
3. Misconduct committed during criminal investigations, like those documented in the Baltimore City Gun Trace Task Force;
4. Criminal activity by officers; and
5. Investigations into misconduct regardless of the outcome.

It is also important that police departments are required to report annually regarding the number of complaints received and how they are resolved.

How will we continue to build community trust in our police department if residents who have experienced such incidents are not able to fully learn about the result? Police are public servants, paid for by taxpayer dollars, and as such we need this transparency to build our public safety programs using justice principles. The community needs strengthened tools where citizens and researchers can evaluate and assess outcomes.

I appreciate the work of this committee and other elected officials to find ways to build trust between police and the citizens they serve, however this bill must be amended in order to achieve those goals.