

TO: Hon. Luke Clippenger, Chair and Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Melissa Badeker, Maryland resident ([melissabadeker@gmail.com](mailto:melissabadeker@gmail.com); 443-977-7596)  
DATE: March 3, 2020

Dear Honorable Chairman Clippenger and Members of the Committee,

As a Maryland resident and member of SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) Baltimore, I am opposed to HB1221 unless amended to expand the range of misconduct our communities have transparency over. Under current law, individuals who file complaints of police misconduct are unable to learn how the department handles the complaint. While HB1221 is an attempt to reform the law, in its current form HB1221 does not go far enough to ensure transparency and accountability. In fact, this bill will only encourage police departments to find valid complaints unsustainable without conducting thorough investigations, strictly to avoid having to disclose the disciplinary files. Tragically, abusive officers will be found innocent and be allowed to stay on the force, perpetuating their abusive behavior to more residents. This is a slap in the face to every person who has had their rights violated by a police officer.

I have a personal connection to this issue through a friend who experienced physical and emotional abuse at the hands of a police officer. A police officer pulled over her vehicle with her teenaged daughter in the passenger seat, and when she asked why she was being pulled over, the police officer violently pulled her out of the vehicle onto the ground and handcuffed her. The officer continuously refused to identify why my friend was being arrested and her daughter detained. They were eventually released without being charged. My friend filed a complaint against the officer, and almost a year passed before she was informed that the officer's actions were found to be justified. Both my friend and her daughter were extremely traumatized and continue to live in fear that they will encounter the police officer again.

This is why I encourage the committee to amend HB1221 to allow disclosure of:

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

I also believe there should be a requirement that police departments report annually regarding the number of complaints received and how they are resolved.

Unless the bill is expanded, its passage will create the illusion of transparency without real reform. Residents like my friend will have no recourse to get justice for having their rights violated by an abusive police officer. Please do the right thing and vote for an unfavorable report of HB 1221 unless amended to allow more meaningful transparency over police misconduct.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Badeker