

February 4, 2021

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB626/HB139
Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern. I live in Chevy Chase, in District 16. I am providing testimony in favor of SB626/HB139, Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force.

My Jewish tradition teaches me that destroying one life is akin to destroying the entire world. In a world already filled with so much violence, we must move to end police violence and change Maryland laws that prevent us from holding police accountable.

The Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability (MCJPA) has called on the General Assembly to pass five specific and impactful reforms. Limiting the Use of Force by police officers is a key change needed to reform our justice system.

I live in Montgomery County, where we have witnessed many people die at the hands of police in the past few years. Black and brown residents are disproportionately represented. **It is important to remember all of their names. Here are a few: Peter Njang, Emanuel Okutuga, Robert White, Mikyas Tegegne, Duncan Lemp, Finan Berhe, and most recently Kwamena Ocran. They were killed by police in Montgomery County.** Under the current state of the law, every one of these killings by police officers were (or will be) legally justified. We must hold police accountable, limit the use of lethal force to a “necessary” standard and increase safe and effective ways for police to interact with civilians.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB626/HB139.