

Dear members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am a resident of District 33 and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I am testifying in support of bill SB0626 which sets statutory Limits on Police Use of Force.

The fact that Maryland does not currently have a strict enough policy on use of force by police officers means that police are able to use their personal discretion on when force is warranted. This often means that people of color, persons with disabilities, and the mentally ill are victims of police brutality in situations that do not warrant it, sometimes resulting in death or life-long medical issues.

Please take a few moments to compare in your mind the imagery of the Anne Arundel County police physically removing a Black man from his car and then kneeling on his back with the imagery of many of the Capitol Police standing by while white supremacists forcefully invaded our Capitol building. Compare this also with the physical abuse Black Lives Matters protesters were subjected to in Portland, where they were kidnapped and physically assaulted by Federal law enforcement officials.

It is clear that police officers choose when and against whom to use violence against and it is clear that many of their decisions are based on racist fears and beliefs that wind up harming those of color, those who are disabled, and those who are mentally ill. Instituting a new use of force policy will ensure that police officers are held to a higher standard when making the decision if force is warranted and will also hold police accountable when they choose to actively not follow the rules.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in support of SB0626.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Sell
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