



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0482 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Whistleblower Protections
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
on January 28, 2021**

Chairman Smith and members of the Committee:

I first introduced this bill in the House in 2015. It prohibits any form of retaliation against a law enforcement officer who reports internal misconduct, whether seemingly minor or even unnecessary considering the state of the law in Maryland. With respect to whistleblower protection, it should be a stated policy of every agency, with clear notice given to every officer upon entry that intervening and reporting misconduct is mandatory, and they will be protected for so doing. There must be zero tolerance for complicity and collusion in wrongdoing; silence is collusion. Full protection for reporting wrongdoing is imperative. Police accountability depends on officers being able to report corruption, racism, violence, and dishonesty safely within their own agencies. The Thin Blue Line, an unwritten code of silence understood among police officers, exists, and the consequences of violating it can be career-ending. A search of court filings will turn up countless incidents where whistleblowers within police departments have been ostracized, fired, reassigned, denied promotions, or given odious

assignments in retaliation for speaking up about wrongdoing within their own departments.

Officers know better than anyone else what happens to “rats”. Coming forward with an allegation of malfeasance against a fellow officer takes a special kind of courage. It takes the willingness to lose the badge you literally fought to earn. A calling that you truly believe in could be whisked away because you put your oath to serve and protect your community above your loyalty to other officers or your own well-being.

The officers who are sworn to protect all of us. Those who are courageous enough to speak up when they witness misconduct in others deserve security so they can continue to do their difficult jobs with honor and integrity. And in an era of mistrust of police, this bill will increase transparency, which is the keystone without which trust cannot be rebuilt.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill P. Carter