



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 670 – Police Reform and
Accountability Act of 2021*
Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2021**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work tirelessly throughout the entire Greater Washington area to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents, support our Jewish day schools and community centers, and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the entire Jewish community.

Enshrined in the fundamental text of our Jewish heritage, the Torah, is a recognition of the role of both those who adjudicate the law and those who enforce it in the structures of a society based on law and civility (Deut. 16:18). Our Jewish community looks upon those entrusted to enforce the law with both great respect and high expectation in keeping with the observation that police officers must be of the highest ethical order, so that they themselves will serve as good examples of following the law. We place enormous trust in the police to protect us against anti-Semitic incidents and our continued positive relations with law enforcement are essential for our continued safety and security. Nonetheless, the substantial number of high-profile deaths in recent years of members of the Black community at the hands of police and the impact of those incidents on Jews of color in our own community, have led us to believe that policing and public safety policy should be reformed through systemic change.

Police reform and accountability demand our attention. House Bill 670 repeals the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBOR) and provides that the Police Department of Baltimore City is an agency and instrumentality of the City of Baltimore, instead of the State. The Bill authorizes a judge to issue a certain "no-knock" search warrant only under certain circumstances and provides that an individual attending a public institution of higher education is exempt from paying tuition if the individual intends to become a police officer under certain circumstances. HB 670 also requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to take certain actions in response to certain violations of a certain Use of Force Statute and requires the Commission to develop a test and training for implicit bias, requiring certain law enforcement agencies to use the implicit bias test at a certain time, and require certain police officers to complete implicit bias testing and training at certain times.

Given the widespread perception that the LEOBOR is overly protective of police, the JCRC supports an alternative adjudication process that is fair and balances the needs of law enforcement and victims. Police accountability is a priority for the JCRC. For this reason, we ask the Committee to give a favorable report on HB 670.