



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: March 25, 2021

RE: SB626 Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 - Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force, Reporting, and Whistleblower Protections

The MLLC supports SB626 Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 - Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force, Reporting, and Whistleblower Protections.

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB626.

Excessive use of force by law enforcement is a nationwide concern. Civilians should not have to worry about abusive power from police. Officers can and should only use the necessary amount of energy to mitigate an incident, make an arrest, or protect themselves or others from harm. Extreme measures of force must be eliminated in practice and accountability must be established if officers irresponsibly harm someone else.

Our communities have seen too many incidents of excessive or lethal use of force from police officers. In Prince George's County, an [officer shot](#) a man in a mental health crisis who was stabbing himself and trying to slit his own throat. About [10%](#) of 9-1-1 calls involve someone suffering from a mental illness. Individuals with a mental disorder are more likely to experience severe use of force from law enforcement. However, racial, ethnic, and low-income populations are [less likely to be diagnosed](#) with a mental illness. Instead of seeing individuals who need medical attention, police officers are quick to perceive our vulnerable communities' behavior as "noncompliant." Communities of color have a greater risk of dealing with this violent misconduct, and it is the state's obligation to protect every single one of its residents by providing crucial boundaries and accountability measures.

SB626 establishes a standard for law enforcement by prohibiting an officer from using intentional use of excessive force. Officers who violate this standard may be charged with a misdemeanor and be sentenced to prison. This bill also creates a whistleblower reporting and protection system. Our communities want change and accountability. It is our duty to provide it, and we can with this piece of legislation.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on SB626.