

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by residents of District 46 who are also community leaders in Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. SURJ is a group of community members supporting local groups working for greater racial justice in Baltimore and the State of Maryland. We are **testifying against HB 670**.



HB 670 includes a number of provisions that modify police policy. We are not testifying against this bill because we do not want to see police reform happen, in fact, we agree it is desperately needed. The problem with this bill is that it doesn't go far enough in a year where better police accountability alternatives are already drafted and ready for passage.

Two particular areas where this bill is insufficient are its provisions on use of force and its modifications to the Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights. In its current form, provisions around limiting police officer's use of force in this bill lacks sufficient details on deescalation alternatives (opting for less-lethal force as a stand-in), don't limit options based on collateral consequences, and don't clearly define what is included and not in "deadly" force. Oversights like these provide the wiggle room that can allow unjust policing to continue.

Additionally, this bill repeals LEOBR without replacing it with a better system. It retains trial boards and creates charging committees, both of which allow for a majority of its members to have pre-existing relationships with police that would bias their decisions. These are active choices to keep the most odious parts of LEOBR. Essentially, this bill preserves the ability of police to police themselves.

While there is one positive part of this bill, the return of the Baltimore City Police Department under the control of Baltimore City government, this is not sufficient to make up for the negatives in this bill, especially as BIPOC activists have been clear on what exactly Maryland needs to do to begin having an accountable police force.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **vote against HB 670** and instead support better alternatives in House Bill 151, which would fully repeal the LEOBR and House Bill 139, which addresses police use of force with a great deal of specificity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

SURJ District 46 Community Leaders

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