

**February 10, 2021**

**BILL:** HB 640

**TITLE:** Criminal Law - Failure to Obey a Reasonable and Lawful Order - Repeal

**POSITION:** SUPPORT

**HEARING DATE:** Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>

**COMMITTEE:** House Judiciary Committee

**SPONSOR:** Delegate Ruth

Dear Members of the Committee,

I live on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in District 36 and I am writing in support of HB0640. I am in favor of repealing Failure to Obey, a Reasonable and Lawful Order.

- Failure to Obey may be enacted when an officer tells someone to put out a cigarette or leave a public bench.
- Failure to Obey can create additional barriers to stable housing, and employment.
- Failure to Obey disproportionately harms Black or African American individuals.
- 63% of people charged with Failure to Obey, a Reasonable and Lawful Order since 2017 are Black or African American. According to U.S. census data Black or African Americans only makeup 31% of the population in Maryland.
- Failure to Obey impacts our most vulnerable including people with disabilities who may not be able to comply with an order due to cognitive limitations.
- Failure to Obey does nothing to protect public safety. Other criminal offenses may be charged in circumstances where public safety or the safety of a police officer is threatened.
- Failure to Obey allows police officers to stop and search the individual with no other justification.

Respectfully submitted,

Hope Clark, Social Action Committee for Racial Justice

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Cc: Members of the House Judiciary Committee