SHELLY HETTLEMAN
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Baltimore County
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Judicial Proceedings Committee
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Joint Committee on Children, Youth,
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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB 790 CRIMINAL LAW –EXECUTIVE OR LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS – OBSTRUCTION

Section 9-306 of the Criminal Law Article states, "A person may not, by threat, force, or corrupt means, obstruct, impede, or try to obstruct or impede the administration of justice in a court of the State." These same provisions do not apply to the Executive or Legislative branches of government.

The events of January 6th, 2021 and events at other state capitals around the country demonstrate that acts violence against the Executive and Legislative branches of government are no longer hypothetical. These tumultuous times demand that our Legislative and Executive branches of government - co-equal branches to the Judiciary - deserve the same protections.

SB790 holds individuals accountable for obstructing or impeding an official proceeding of the executive or legislative branch of government through threat, force, or corrupt means. It adopts the current legal standard imposed for interference of court proceedings and only applies in circumstances of actual interference in a proceeding, and does not apply to dissent, debate, or opposition to policies.

Expanding Maryland's obstruction of justice statute to include all branches of government would afford necessary protections to participants in the executive and legislative branches of government.

In this time of political tension, by expanding current protections, SB 790 will ensure that our government functions are protected, and that the longest operating state capital continues operating according to the democratic ideals our country and state were founded on.