



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 747
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, March 1, 2023

My name is Joanna Silver. I am a resident of Silver Spring in District 18. I am testifying on behalf of the Silver Spring Justice Coalition in opposition to SB 747.

The Silver Spring Justice Coalition (SSJC) is a coalition of community members, faith groups, and civil and human rights organizations from throughout Montgomery County committed to eliminating harm caused by police and empowering those communities most affected by policing. Essential to these goals is full transparency and accountability for police misconduct. SB 747 would seriously diminish and undermine Anton's Law, for which we fought so hard.

Anton's Law is far from perfect, but through it the Silver Spring Justice Coalition has obtained important information about the conduct of officers and the disciplinary consequences of their actions in cases that did not involve racial bias or excessive force. For example, we obtained the investigative file of the two officers who verbally and emotionally abused and mistreated a 5-year old child and his mother at an elementary school in Silver Spring. This outrageous case that drew international attention did not involve a single charge of racial bias or excessive force, but it was essential for our community to know exactly what punishment was meted out in response to the officers' harmful actions.

In another instance, we learned through an MPIA request that officers who killed a young Black man in Gaithersburg had previously engaged in verbally abusive conduct towards a car full of young Black men during an unlawfully prolonged traffic stop. We have used information like this to educate the community and advocate for important police reforms in discussions with lawmakers and community leaders.

This bill seeks to limit our ability to have the information we need to advocate for our community. We cannot address individual or systemic problems with policing in our County and state unless we know as much as possible about when our police engage in misconduct and what the consequences are. These were the motivating principles that led to the passage of Anton's Law after years of work by the victims of police harm and their families. We urge you not to undermine and retreat from these principles; we urge you to issue an unfavorable report on SB747.

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