



## UNFAVORABLE Testimony of SB 747

Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Police Officers  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 1, 2023

Dear Honorable Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

CASA is the largest immigrant services and advocacy organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 120,000 Black and Latino immigrants and working families. Our mission is to create a more just society by building power and improving the quality of life in working-class and immigrant communities. We envision a future where our members stand in their own power, our families live free from discrimination and fear, and our diverse communities thrive as we work with our partners to achieve full human rights for all.

CASA, and its more than 100,000 members residing in the state of Maryland, strongly urge an UNFAVORABLE report on SB 747. In 2021, this committee and the General Assembly worked tirelessly to bring justice to families and communities that have been egregiously wronged in our policing system with the passage of the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, also known as Anton's Law. This legislation was brought forth by the movement for police accountability and reform spurred by the 2018 death of Anton Black, a 19-year-old Black teen who died in police custody after being restrained by three Greensboro police officers in Caroline County on Maryland's Eastern Shore. He was one of 31 people who died that year through the actions of police, according to the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.<sup>1</sup> Under Anton's Law, internal investigations and disciplinary records would no longer be considered personnel records and would, therefore, no longer be subject to mandatory nondisclosure under the personnel records under the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA). The passage of Anton's Law shed light on these previously opaque processes, facilitating greater community oversight of the law enforcement agencies that serve them.

The PIA is meant to provide a means by which citizens can hold government agencies accountable. Barring these records from public view is contrary to the public interest, the intent of the PIA, and the intent of the legislature in 2021. The records in question under this bill provide critical insight into how police agencies respond to allegations of misconduct. Barring these records from public view represents a purposeful attempt to roll back strides toward community oversight and an utter disregard for community sentiment.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://goccp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/Deaths-Involving-a-Law-Enforcement-Officer-2018.pdf>

Black and Latino communities have been and continue to be disproportionately affected by police violence. Data from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention showcase the disparity that Black Marylanders face in their interaction with police, especially in deaths involving law enforcement officers. Our communities have lacked the necessary tools they need to keep individuals in positions of authority accountable. Anton's Law provided our communities with these tools to ensure that justice and accountability are taking place.

**CASA respectfully requests that the committee offer an unfavorable report on SB 747.**