

SB0747\_JoShifrin\_UNFAV  
Date of Hearing: March 1, 2023  
Jo Shifrin  
Bethesda, MD 20817

**TESTIMONY ON SB0747- POSITION: UNFAVORABLE**  
**Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Police Officers**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Jo Shifrin

**OPENING: My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB0747, Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Police Officers.**

The concept of *tzelem elohim* – the idea that all people are created in the Divine image and therefore are equally precious and worthy of dignity and respect – is central to Judaism. It is so central that our sacred texts teach us that the destruction of one life is the same as destroying the whole world. Unfortunately, in Maryland, we know that lives are destroyed every day through the interactions between the police and people of color.

This bill seeks to weaken Anton’s Law. It removes all justification for Maryland residents to obtain information about the conduct of police officers and the discipline they were subject to unless the case involved excessive force or racial bias. Although Anton’s Law was not perfect, it does allow Maryland residents to obtain information about the conduct of police officers and the discipline they received in cases that did not involve excessive force or racial bias.

This is an extremely important distinction. For example, several years ago, a distraught 5 year old left his elementary school in Silver Spring. Two police officers were tasked with finding him and returning him to the school. Instead of doing so, they yelled at him and threatened him, abusing him emotionally. When they brought him into the school, his mother was called and the officers were verbally abusive to her as well. We know this because of a video that captured this interaction between the police, the little boy, his mother, and school officials. Since neither excessive force or racial bias came into play in this cruel event, had SB0747 been the law, no information would have been available to the public about this incident or these officers.

It is imperative that police are held accountable for their untoward and harmful behavior toward residents of Maryland, regardless of whether there is racial bias or excessive force.

Residents of Maryland must have access to this type of information so that police officers know that they are being held to account for their misconduct and the community knows that the

police officers who harm them rather than serve, are appropriately dealt with. I believe that It is only through this process that police officers will respect all members of the community and that the community will, in turn, trust the police.

The concept of *tzelem elohim* – the idea that all people are created in the Divine image and therefore are equally precious and worthy of dignity and respect – is central to Judaism. It is so central that our sacred texts teach us that the destruction of one life is the same as destroying the whole world. Unfortunately, in Maryland, we know that lives are destroyed every day through the interactions between the police and people of color. Please do not eviscerate Anton's Law.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on SB0747.**