



January 24, 2023

Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building, Room 101  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB38 No-Knock Warrants**

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 38 sponsored by Delegate Gabriel Acevero. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

This bill aims to repeal the authority for issuing and executing a no-knock search warrant and establish specific procedures defining how search warrants may be issued and executed.

No knock warrants authorize law enforcement officers to enter premises such as homes, hotel rooms and apartments without first knocking to announce their presence, objective or purpose. They are purportedly intended to avoid 1) compromising the safety of officers or other individuals or 2) the destruction of objects or items for which officers are searching. But they remain one of the most intrusive, dangerous and deadly tactics utilized by police officers today.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, "Although officers need not take affirmative steps to make an independent re-verification of the circumstances already recognized by a magistrate in issuing a no-knock warrant, such a warrant does not entitle officers to disregard reliable information clearly negating the existence of exigent circumstances when they receive such information before execution of the warrant."<sup>1</sup>

Judges are expected to thoroughly review requests for no-knock warrants, but a Washington Post investigation found that they frequently "rely on the word of police officers and rarely question the merits of the requests, offering little resistance when they seek authorization for no-knocks."<sup>2</sup>

No-knock warrants have been authorized by judges and executed by officers with horrifying consequences for decades. According to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, dozens of civilians and multiple law enforcement officers have died during no-knock raids between 2010 and 2016.<sup>3</sup> In one high profile case, on March 13, 2020, 26-year-old Breonna Taylor was shot and killed in her own apartment in Louisville, KY after officers forced their way in.

These searches, which were meant to be used sparingly, have now become commonplace. There are many cases of mistaken identity, and examples of these warrants being executed at the incorrect addresses, such as in the case of 7-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones who was fatally shot in the head by a police officer as she slept on a couch.<sup>4</sup>

The Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution protects against unreasonable searches, and judges often fail to question the merit of the requests they grant. According to Campaign Zero, nearly thirty states and over twenty cities have implemented legislation or ordinances restricting or prohibiting the use of no-knock warrants.<sup>5</sup>

These warrants may aim to leverage the element of surprise to help secure evidence, but securing evidence should not be prioritized over protecting lives jeopardized by this tactic.

Passing HB38 is a meaningful component of effective police reform that would help save lives and delineate a process by which search warrants can be issued. Therefore, we support this bill and respectfully urge your favorable vote. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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- 1) [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/no-knock\\_warrant](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/no-knock_warrant)
- 2) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2022/no-knock-warrants-judges/>
- 3) <https://www.naacpldf.org/end-no-knock-warrants/>
- 4) <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2019/04/04/aiyana-stanley-jones-settlement-civil/3365796002/>
- 5) <https://campaignzero.org/>