

HB 0533_JoShifrin_FAV

Date of Hearing: February 27, 2024

Jo Shifrin

Bethesda, MD 20817

TESTIMONY ON HB 0533 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

**County Police Accountability Boards -
Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct**

TO: Chair Delegate Luke Clippinger,, Vice Chair J. Sandy Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Jo Shifrin

My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 0533, County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct.

I have been a resident of Montgomery County for the past 10 years. My support for this legislation comes from my grounding in Jewish values. The *Torah* commands *Tzedek tzedek tirdoff* – Justice justice you shall pursue. It is said that the word “justice” was written twice to indicate that justice must be pursued in a just manner. *Tzelem elohim* teaches that all people are created with inherent and equal dignity and value. Unfortunately, in Maryland, Black and brown lives are disproportionately harmed by police misconduct.

Historic police reforms were passed by the General Assembly several years ago, repealing the Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights and replacing part of it with a new disciplinary framework which allowed all Maryland counties and Baltimore City to establish a Police Accountability Board (PAB).

This legislation, HB 0533, is needed because in the original legislation, the PABs were not given independent investigatory and subpoena powers to review police misconduct concurrently with local police departments. As such, members of various communities felt unable to trust internal police investigations. HB 0533 will remedy this omission from the original legislation. An investigation that is concurrent with the law enforcement agency investigating the complaint will expedite this review process. Having their own investigators, who can exercise subpoena power and work independently from the law enforcement agency, will empower the PABs and provide more integrity to this process. And this will, in turn, make communities feel safer.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 0533.