

Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

Tuesday, February 27th, 2024

HB 533 - County Police Accountability Boards – Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct

Favorable with Amendments

Dear Honorable Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Bartlett, and committee members,

We write to you to express our support, with amendments, for HB 533, on behalf of the Prince George's County Police Accountability Coalition. We are a grassroots coalition of directly impacted Maryland residents, police accountability organizations, and economic justice community groups.

Since the Police Accountability Boards (PABs) have been established, we still have not seen police held accountable for misconduct, abuse of power, excessive use of force, and worse. Many PABs have faced pushback and opposition when requesting information from police and sheriff departments to be able to adjudicate people's claims. This legislation is a step in the right direction, but in order to ensure all PABs are able to gather all the facts, HB 533 must be amended to give all boards investigatory and subpoena power rather than enabling counties and Baltimore City to grant a PAB this authority.

Our coalition has many directly impacted people whose sons, cousins, nephews, and other loved ones have been murdered by police officers yet never received justice. It is horrifically traumatizing for these family members to continuously lobby county elected officials to expand the powers of the PABs in order to receive some semblance of justice for their loved ones. We are urging the committee to do the right thing and amend the legislation to give Police Accountability Boards investigatory and subpoena power, as well as prohibit former sheriff and police officers from serving on the PABs.

Respectfully,

Concerned Citizens for Bail Reform
The Talking Drum Inc.
Just Us Initiative
Nikki Owens
Sarah Harper
John Spillane