



# HARTFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

COURAGE HONOR INTEGRITY

## Senate Bill 625 - Support

### Public Safety-Police Accountability-Investigation Record Relating to Unfounded and Exonerated Complaints

#### Letter of SUPPORT to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 12, 2025

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, I am pleased to submit this letter of support concerning Senate Bill 625.

During the 2021 legislative session the Maryland General Assembly passed Senate Bill 178 as part of what was referred to as the Maryland Police Accountability Act. This legislation now allows for the public to have access to the personnel files of law enforcement officers relating to any "Police Misconduct" complaint that results in an investigation.

As I am sure members of this Committee are aware, the majority of these complaints are sent to the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC), where civilian members review the findings and decide on the merits of the complaint and if discipline is warranted.

The General Assembly has, for the last five years, made it a priority to pass legislation allowing individuals convicted of certain crimes to have their records expunged after a certain time frame. Most notably, the Maryland General Assembly passed, and Governor Moore signed, the Maryland Clean Slate Act in 2024. This gives nearly half a million Marylanders, once convicted of crimes, the ability to have their records expunged.

Senate Bill 625 would only allow that a police officer's records to be removed from their personnel file if the complaint is unfounded, if they are exonerated by the ACC or a Trial Board.

These frivolous complaints against police officers in Maryland should be removed from an officer's records and not held against them to paint a negative picture of the officer's job performance.

I am hopefully that this Committee will support our men and women in law enforcement and ensure they are vindicated and damaging complaints that are unfounded are removed from their records. I would urge a favorable report of SB 625.

Respectfully Offered,

Sheriff Jeffrey R. Gahler