



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1115
HB1115: Courts - Improperly Summoning a Police Officer - Civil Liability

Cathryn Paul, On Behalf of CASA de Maryland, Inc.
Judiciary Committee

To Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

CASA de Maryland (“CASA”) is pleased to provide enthusiastic support for House Bill 1115, Courts - Improperly Summoning a Police Officer - Civil Liability.

CASA is the largest membership based immigrant advocacy and services organization in the region with approximately 100,000 members across the state. CASA provides a variety of different services that serve black and brown immigrants in Maryland. We are proud to partner with the Prince Georges Police Department through our Public Safety Program (funded by a Dept. of Justice Community Based Crime Reduction grant) to increase positive interactions and trust between Langley Park residents and law enforcement. We do this through hosting monthly coffee clubs and community walks with residents and officers, as well as a summer youth soccer clinic with the Police Athletic League and Spanish Language for Community Policing course - all key programs that offer opportunities for police and residents to engage and build trust, awareness and understanding.

With a mission to improve trust between the police and our community members, the high numbers of racially motivated 911 calls that have gained national attention across the country over the last several years have been troubling to our members. Unnecessary and racially motivated phone calls to the police are disrupting the lives of the people of color that are simply participating in their lives. Aside from racially biased motivated 911 calls being morally wrong, they are extremely dangerous, as they put lives in jeopardy by sending police officers when they are not needed, resulting in the possibility of officers not being able to respond to critical emergencies. Resources and time are wasted when police officers respond to calls where no one is in real danger.

Furthermore, bias-motivated calls bring police officers into dramatic scenes of racism, which puts the validity of the officer that is responding at risk. It is well documented that communities of color already have a deep-seated both fear and lack of trust in law enforcement - and police responding to racially-motivated 911 calls has a potential to worsen the police-community relationship, which instead, we should be focused on repairing.

House Bill 1115 would effectively discourage racially biased 911 calls by allowing citizens to bring civil action for damages against another person who knowingly calls the police with the intent to discriminate against them. The bill would be a step toward community and police trust, discourage discrimination and increase the overall safety of all Marylanders. For all of the reasons stated above, CASA **strongly urges a favorable report of HB1115**. Thank you for your consideration.