

Testimony on HB1221

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Good afternoon, Delegates,

I'm from the gun violence prevention ministry at a church in Bethesda that has studied how police departments across Maryland -- and especially in Baltimore -- put their officers at serious and undue risk every day, because many of the communities they serve can't trust them.

They fear the police. As a result, members of communities in Baltimore, for example, often undermine the police, refusing to share intelligence about crimes in their neighborhoods and leaving officers liable to make uninformed and too often, deadly decisions at the wrong time.

In Baltimore, people see members of their communities insulted, strip-searched and threatened -- and then, when they complain, see only 2.2 percent of their complaints properly investigated, or what the police department calls, "sustained".

Our ministry works directly with members of the McElderry Park community in East Baltimore, including the violence interrupters of Safe Streets and Amazing Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, to knit back together the communal ties that have drastically reduced homicides in Oakland, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York.

All of those programs include building trust in the police officers that work in their communities -- through transparency that lets communities know how

their complaints against police were conducted -- whether they were “sustained” by internal investigations, or not.

And that is why I urge you to oppose HB1221, unless you amend it to include investigations of both “unsustained” and “sustained” complaints of law enforcement misconduct.