

COMMUNITY JUSTICE COALITION

Prince George's County, MD

HB 1221 Public Information Act - Personnel and Investigatory Records - Complaints Against Law Enforcement Officers

March 3, 2020

Position: Oppose Unless Amended

Community Justice Coalition respectfully opposes HB 1221, a bill that would allow formal complaints of job-related misconduct of law enforcement officers to be public information, unless it is amended with provisions that protect the community and provide greater transparency.

Community Justice Coalition is a group of organizations and concerned community members who are dedicated to ensuring police accountability in Prince George's County. Our organization centers and uplifts people of color and those impacted by the criminal legal system.

For decades, the Prince George's County Police Department has continuously broken the trust of the community that has left lasting trauma in the lives of community members. A 2019 Journal of Adolescent Health study found that young people who experienced police interaction including harsh language, threats and use of force face a higher likelihood of emotional distress and posttraumatic stress symptoms than their peers.¹ Further, a 2018 Lancet published study found that police brutality has negative mental health impacts for people of color and can result in more poor mental health days.² Beyond the data, many of our coalition members and leaders have faced trauma at the hands of PGCPD. Our communities deserve full transparency about police misconduct to restore the harm done by law enforcement officers.

While we acknowledge the intentions of the bill, Community Justice Coalition would like to see more instances of police misconduct classified as public information and an independent process for complaints.

We would like to allow the disclosure of:

1. All use of force investigations, regardless of whether it causes death or serious bodily injury;
2. All discrimination or bias misconduct, not only "prohibited discrimination" as the bill currently states;
3. Misconduct committed during criminal investigations, like those documented in the Baltimore City Gun Trace Task Force;
4. Criminal activity by officers; and
5. Investigations into misconduct regardless of the outcome

Additionally, we would like for the custodial charge who determines if complaint-record information is disclosable to the complainant or others shall be independent of law enforcement agencies and instead be made up of citizens similar to a jury.

Sincerely,

Community Justice Coalition

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¹ <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/10/191009075125.htm>

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)33060-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)33060-5/fulltext)