

March 9, 2020

## **Testimony AGAINST HB1640**

Dear Members of the House Judiciary committee,

I am writing to tell you of my strong opposition to House Bill 1640, which would allow the Mayor or Police Commissioner to authorize the Morgan State University police to operate anywhere in the city. Shame on all of you that sponsored this bill and want to see it pass! I am a resident of Baltimore City and someone with experience of how deadly these officers can be.

On July 18, 2013, my older brother, Tyrone West, an unarmed man, was beaten to death by the police over a traffic stop. In total, between eleven and fifteen police officers are reported to have taken part in the brutality, including David Lewis, a Morgan State University officer.

Eyewitnesses are quoted in police documents related to the case as follows –

"He was saying, 'You got me, you got me, stop hitting me!'" – Corinthea Servance

"That's when all of them piled in, beating him and kicking him, beating him and kicking him, until the guy went out. They could've put handcuffs on him without doing all that." "Every police that got there jumped into it." – James Price

"...they pulled him out by his dreads and started beating him and maced him, he got up and called for help and the cops knocked him over and beat him to death." "...the worst thing I ever saw." – Chuma Obineme

Ayesha Rucker said that Tyrone ran, "not to flee just to get away" but that an officer from Morgan State "jumped" him.

It took me six months to find out the name of the Morgan State officer involved in the death of my brother. I had to submit a public information act request in the end. His name is David Lewis, and I learned that he played a crucial role in Tyrone's murder. He was in such a hurry to arrive that he crashed into another officer's car, and then witnesses say that Lewis, weighing 315 pounds, kneeled on Tyrone's back, after my brother had already been severely beaten, cuffed, and hogtied.

No officer, including David Lewis, has ever been held to account for my brother's murder. My family received a settlement from the City of Baltimore, which I had to refuse, because it contained a requirement to stay silent about the case. I will not let myself be silenced. Every single Wednesday for the last six and a half years, I have held a rally called West Wednesday for Tyrone and for all victims of police brutality, and I will not stop until there is accountability.

This bill, as it currently stands, is way too broad. I do not want to see more victims like my brother Tyrone created by letting special police forces have authority all over the city, with even less accountability than the corrupt Baltimore Police Department. While I would prefer to see no more expansion of police powers period, I have been told that Morgan State students trust the Morgan State police more than they trust the Baltimore Police Department, and would prefer to have them be the ones to patrol their off-campus housing. Therefore, I would be willing to accept this bill if and only if their expansion was given a limit to just cover these areas. The students and the neighbors affected should be the ones to decide that, but it should NOT be over the whole city.

Sincerely,

Tawanda Jones