

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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February 9, 2021

House Bill 188 – No-Knock Warrants – Elimination (Duncan’s Act) **POSITION: Support**

Dear Chairperson Clippinger, Vice Chairperson Atterbeary, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

House Bill 188 eliminates a law enforcement official from being able to obtain and execute a “no-knock” search warrant. Instead, under HB188, the officer must give reasonable notice of the officer’s authority and purpose to any individual inside the dwelling or the area subject to the search warrant.

The fatal police shooting of Breonna Taylor in March, 2020, raised outcries from around the country about the effectiveness and necessity of no-knock search warrants. Kenneth Walker, who was in the apartment at the time of the botched warrant execution, fired a round from his weapon in self-defense after the officers forcibly entered the apartment. The officers responded by firing 20 bullets, 8 of which struck and killed Ms. Taylor. Mr. Walker attests that the officers did not attempt to identify themselves before pounding on and breaking in the door.

The senseless death of Breonna Taylor is just one of many in our nation’s history that likely could have been prevented if law enforcement officers had simply announced themselves before entering the residence to execute a search warrant. To the extent that Maryland can prevent this from happening in our state by requiring officers to reasonably announce themselves, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights believes that we should take these steps.

For this, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on HB188. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.