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Judicial Proceedings Committee

Vice Chair, Baltimore County
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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February 2, 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 463 – Public Safety – Police Athletic League Grant Fund - Establishment

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

Police athletic leagues are summer and after-school drop-in programs which provide a safe, positive and developing atmosphere for young people between the ages of 8 and 17 who live in areas which are crime and violence-prone. They feature fun and enriching daily programs of athletics, creative activities and personal development. Police and community volunteers join in supervising the activities. In Baltimore County alone, there are 9 PAL locations. The PAL programs break barriers, change attitudes and build meaningful relationships by providing opportunities for youth and officers to positively engage with one another.

The State of Maryland has supported PAL programs through the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention. In 2018 alone, the Hogan Administration awarded \$250,000 to six jurisdictions to start PAL programs in Annapolis, Baltimore City, Cambridge, Salisbury, Hagerstown and Cecil County. As these programs give police an opportunity to get involved in children's lives in a meaningful way, the PAL programs are especially important today, after a year in which very negative messages about police officers were transmitted to Maryland's youth.

Senate Bill 463 sets up the Police Athletic League Grant Fund in the GOCCP office, requires annual State funding in the amount of \$500,000 and directs the Executive Director of GOCCP to establish procedures for local governments and organizations to apply for grants from the Fund. In this way, support for local police athletic leagues will be established as an ongoing program of the Government of Maryland.

This is a very modest measure but an important one as we seek ways of healing the acrimony between the State law enforcement community and its citizens, particularly its citizens of color.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 463 and of course will be willing to answer any questions of the Committee members.