

Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 4, 2021

SB 626 – Law Enforcement Officers -- Use of Force

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Committee members,

My name is **Erica Scott** and I live in **Glen Burnie**, Maryland. I'm formally submitting my written testimony in support of SB 626 on Use of Force.

In July of 2015, two Anne Arundel County Police Officers, Officer Ferris and Bilter responded to a call at my residence, while my teenage daughters were home, at the time both my daughters were under the age of 19. I was not home at the time. My daughter was able to use her phone to call me, so I could speak with Officer Ferris and Bilter. During our conversation, Officer Ferris and I agreed that I would speak with my daughters when I returned home. Both Officers later spoke with their supervisor and completed their report, omitting information that was significant to the call and the resolution of the call, as well as mis-categorized; and misinformed officials during a hearing. Once I became aware of the report that both officers had written, between 1 to 2 years later, I was not able to effectively appeal the report or its content that had a significant impact on the lives of my children. Police departments that fail to hold their officers accountable should be eligible to lose state funding.

As you know, Maryland does not have statutory limits on use of force, and the Supreme Court cases fail to adequately protect the lives and safety of Maryland residents. Instead of merely codifying *Graham* and *Garner* into state law, we must elevate the "objectively reasonable" standard to prohibit officers from using force unless it is **necessary** as a last resort, under the totality of the circumstances, after the officer has exhausted de-escalation and other reasonable alternatives. Although there are other necessary components to a robust use of force statute, failing to change the legal standard will maintain the status quo and let officers remain unaccountable for the harm they cause.

Now is the time for a statewide use of force standard that holds officers accountable when they use unlawful force, and ensures that officers will do everything they need to do in order to preserve human life. I urge a favorable vote on SB 626.

Attentively,
Erica Scott