



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**SB0627 – LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS BILL OF RIGHTS –
REPEAL AND PROCEDURES FOR DISCIPLINE
JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE, FEBRUARY 4, 2021
SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)**. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County, with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC joins more than 70 Maryland organizations in seeking repeal of the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBR), as called for in SB627. We thank the lead sponsor, Senator Jill P. Carter, for her courageous leadership on this issue.

Maryland has been in turmoil, and many Marylanders have been in despair, over the systemic racism in our public safety system – a system that fails to hold law enforcement personnel and their agencies accountable for the injury and death of Black people at the hands of law enforcement officers. This must stop. We call for a new, uniform, fair, and transparent law enforcement disciplinary process, to be adopted by all jurisdictions in the State. Such a process will begin to reestablish the trust that must exist in a democracy, between law enforcement and ALL residents. The very act of repealing the Bill of Rights that sets law enforcement officers apart from, and above, all other Maryland residents is in itself a first step on the road to rebuilding that trust.

By creating a new system of reporting, investigating, and acting on charges of police misconduct, the State would require that law enforcement officers have the same accountability as other civil servants. We believe, however, that the process proposed in SB627 would provide insufficient opportunity for citizen oversight. WDC members, like State Senators, have been in dozens of hearings and meetings on police reforms during the past nine months. The one thing that everyone in these meetings (except members of police unions and a few State's Attorneys) have agreed upon is the need for citizen involvement and oversight in addressing police misconduct and subsequent police disciplinary processes. This is where SB627 falls short. By merely allowing (rather than mandating) some form of citizen review at the local level, the bill fails to satisfy the expressed opinions and needs of citizens who spoke up in all those meetings. **We urge the members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee Carter to incorporate ways for citizens to be more engaged in reviewing perceived police misconduct.**

WDC congratulates the Chair and Committee members for their unflinching work and commitment to a new era in Maryland policing. We look forward to a favorable response to our concern.

Respectfully,

Diana Conway
President