

**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
February 3, 2021**

**SB 627– Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights – Repeal and Procedures for Discipline**

**FAVORABLE**

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

My name is **Erica Scott** and I live in **Glen Burnie**, Maryland. I am testifying in support of SB 627 to repeal the Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights (“LEOBR”) and create a streamlined system without the procedural barriers that prevent discipline. This bill is about racial justice and holding officers accountable for the violence, abuse, and trauma they inflict on the community, mostly Black and Brown residents.

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.

As you know, Maryland was the first state to create this type of law, and Maryland’s LEOBR is considered to be the most extreme in the country. LEOBR protects officers from accountability by giving them special due process rights that go beyond what is required under the Constitution. For instance, there is no reason why complaints need to go through a hearing board process before officers can be disciplined. As a result of LEOBR’s extra rights, only a few officers receive any discipline at all. In the vast majority of incidents of violence and misconduct, the officer receives no discipline and is not held accountable. LEOBR also allows police chiefs to escape accountability because they can say that it was the hearing board that made the decision, not them so their “hands are tied”. This is why it is so important to have a transparent and streamlined discipline process that allows for us to know exactly who is responsible for holding officers accountable.

I believe that officers should have the same rights and not be treated differently than any other state or local employee, especially since officers have so much power in the community – literally making life or death decisions. They should not be given extra rights.

Maryland must also ensure that when LEOBR is repealed, local jurisdictions cannot just recreate LEOBR at the local level. That is why it is important that this bill prohibits local laws and collective bargaining agreements that conflict with the due process rights and procedures laid out in the bill.

SB 627 is a necessary bill so that Maryland finally stops shielding officers from accountability. Now is the time for a full repeal of LEOBR. I urge a favorable vote on SB 627.

Sincerely,  
**Erica Scott**