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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB627

Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Emily Blank

“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.” - Leviticus 19:15

My name is Emily Blank. I live in Brentwood, in District 47A. This testimony is in support of SB627, Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline.

The Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights (LEOBR) often makes it extremely difficult to hold police accountable for acts of violence and other abuses. Decisions about guilt are made by uniformed police officers, colleagues of the accused, who no doubt have a professional bias (and an incentive to be lenient lest they be judged harshly for similar misdeeds). Although we hope the police, as carriers of public trust, would have a higher standard of ethics than the average person, there is no reason to expect that this is true. Like all employees, police require oversight.

LEOBR also discourages transparency. According to the Baltimore Sun Editorial Board, LEOBR “requires that other officers conduct investigations, rather than independent actors (unless the governor calls for it); bans interview techniques police routinely use on average citizens, including having more than one questioner.”¹

Finally, police officers are given a grace period of five days before they need to explain their actions to their supervisors, a courtesy not extended to other citizens accused of crimes.²

While it is true that police officers sometimes have to make split second decisions, it is possible to disable a suspect without killing him or her, which seems to happen too frequently.

Therefore, we must repeal LEOBR in the name of justice. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB627.**

¹ Baltimore Sun Editorial Board. “Maryland Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights: an impediment to accountability.” *The Baltimore Sun*. October 22, 2020.

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-1023-leobr-repeal-20201022-kwcpst5abne4lezpoto76r77e-story.html>.

² Ibid.

"Justice, justice, shall you pursue." Deuteronomy 16:20