



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0626 - Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
on February 4, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Vice-chair, and Members of the Committee:

Senate Bill 0626 is a bill seeking to address the issue of excessive or improper use of force by police officers attempting to apprehend or detain a civilian. It provides a procedural framework, promoting transparency to the public and clarity to officers, so that they may understand where, how, and under what circumstances use of force is permitted. In the hopes of a favorable report, we seek to not only improve communication between officers and the public, but also to heal the wounds caused by disparate treatment of our communities of color. Through careful research and consideration, we have developed comprehensive guidance for police use of force, and stress the importance of transitioning from the current “reasonable person” standard to one of absolute necessity.

Additionally, this bill offers procedural guidance for filing civil suits against officers whose use of force is in a manner inconsistent with our proposed policy. With an emphasis on training and accountability, we wish to support officers who represent the department with honor and integrity, while distinguishing those that would seek to abuse the system.

To protect the public from harm, it is imperative that proper checks and balances are in place. As such, recommendations for how to properly address issues of non-compliance are respectfully provided, which include the withholding of departmental funding under certain, limited circumstances.

It is my sincere hope that we can continue to work with parties on both sides of the aisle to reach a consensus on effective language for this legislation. Dispelling the narrative that this type of legislation is, in any way, “anti-police” is of critical importance. The goal of the bill is not to undo effective and efficient aspects of the current system or to punish good police officers. The purpose of reform is to repair what is broken and rebuild public trust in law enforcement. Public trust is essential to the health and vitality of departmental operations.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a distinct "P" and "C".

Jill P. Carter