

Chris Apple  
7001 Cradlerock Farm Court  
Columbia, MD 21045  
District 13

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Bill SB0627, Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline

Feb 4, 2021

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

FROM: Chris Apple

I am Chris Apple, I live in Columbia in District 13. This testimony is in support of Bill SB0627.

Between 2015 and 2019, almost 14,000 complaints of misconduct were filed against Baltimore police officers, a rate of about seven per day.<sup>1</sup> Because of LEOBR, these complaints must be investigated in secret, and only by other officers. No community oversight board or ombudsman has access to verify the investigation was thorough and impartial.

Because of LEOBR, investigating officers also have the power to dismiss any complaints they deem frivolous, by choosing not to “sustain” them. These decisions are made in secret and are never released to the public, eliminating any chance of civilian oversight. Marylanders have no way to ensure that those investigations were properly handled. Though some officers accrue dozens of complaints against them, only about 8% are sustained. Some citizens have claimed their complaints were improperly dismissed.<sup>2</sup> In fact, one complaint was not sustained even after the officer *admitted to the misconduct under oath*.

Communities have suffered at the hands of these officers and they deserve to know what is being done about it. If an officer is cleared of dozens of complaints, the communities deserve to know why. Our tax dollars fund these disciplinary investigations -- Marylanders deserve to know what happens in them. But we will never know what is happening until LEOBR is repealed and these investigations can be observed by third parties.

Someone with the authority to use deadly force should be under *increased* scrutiny, not protected with secrecy. Oversight is a reasonable requirement for a position with a lot of authority, especially a public servant.

I respectfully urge you to support SB0627, ensuring Marylanders get necessary transparency about the actions of their public servants.

---

<sup>1</sup> Spielberg, Joe. *Chasing Justice*. Baltimore, 2021.

<https://www.aclu-md.org/en/publications/chasing-justice-addressing-police-violence-and-corruption-maryland>

<sup>2</sup> Hamlett, Erica. Interview with ACLU of Maryland. <https://www.facebook.com/ACLUMD/posts/10158786928628766>