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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: Carol Stern on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Carol Stern and I am from Chevy Chase in District 16, and I am co-chair of the Justice System Reform & Immigrant Rights team of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ organizes more than 5,500 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice. I am providing this testimony on behalf of JUFJ in support of SB627, Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline.

Jewish tradition teaches us that destroying one life is akin to destroying the entire world. In a world already filled with so much violence, we must move to end police violence and change Maryland laws that prevent us from holding police accountable. JUFJ has joined more than 90 other organizations across Maryland calling on the General Assembly to pass five specific and impactful reforms. One of these is the repeal of the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBR).

Repeal of LEOBR is absolutely necessary to end the racist, corrupt, and inequitable policing that has been taking place in Maryland for far too long. LEOBR provides special protections for police, unlike any other public employee, cannot be disciplined until they are found guilty in a mini-trial, no matter how clear the evidence, or how egregious the misconduct. Police should not have special rights that no other public employee has to avoid discipline. LEOBR also permits non-transparent self-investigations by police departments, creating a culture of impunity that is compounded by the fact that the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) denies the public access to critical information about police misconduct. For example, look at the 2018 police killing of a Silver Spring man, Robert White z"l, who was walking while Black, unarmed

through his neighborhood. To this day, White's community has never learned the details of the investigation, except that the officer still serves on the police force. It is unconscionable that a man has been killed by a public employee, and the public has no oversight over the person who killed him or the process for holding that person accountable.

Jewish tradition says that we are called to be partners in the creation of a more perfect world — in this time, that call is louder than ever. Repealing LEOBR is a step toward that more perfect world we must create together.

JUFJ respectfully urges a favorable report on SB627.