



TESTIMONY FOR SB0042
PUBLIC SAFETY – POLICE OFFICERS – SCREENING FOR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR,
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, AND BIAS

Bill Sponsor: Senator Young

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0042 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

Over-policing and use of force have made news headlines almost every week during the past year. Demonstrations have broken out across all 50 states. As a nation, we are facing a reckoning for giving police too much authority and too many rights that we, as citizens, don't have. We are now rushing to make systemic changes in how, and when, police officers can use force, and what to do when police overstep their authority. However, one of the biggest underlying factors in over-policing and the deadly use of force is who we hire to be police officers in the first place and how we retain them.

We all talk about good officers and bad officers. We know they both exist and we fear that even if we make sweeping changes to policing procedures and training, we will find that we still have bad officers.

This bill does two things that we desperately need – it provides a mechanism for ensuring that we hire good officers and get rid of bad ones. Because policing puts a person in a position of power, we should have potential employees pass a psychological evaluation to determine if they have issues with aggressive or violent behavior, or are biased against some of the very people they would be serving. We should not hire them if they can't pass the evaluation.

We should also have them get re-evaluated every 5 years to catch those who have developed aggressive behaviors or biases during their tenure and allow policing organizations to offer them other positions or to terminate them, if necessary. We should also terminate an officer if it is discovered that they belong to a hate group after they have been hired.

The bottom line is - you cannot train out hatred or bias. You cannot legislate behavior. But you can offer solutions and tools that ensure that policing organizations are hiring the right people and terminating those who should not have a badge.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.