

**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 4, 2021**

SB 626 – Law Enforcement Officers- Use of Force

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Committee members,

My name is Melissa Ladd and I live in Olney, Maryland. I am a volunteer with Maryland Moms Demand Action, and I am formally submitting my written testimony in support of SB 626 on Use of Force by Law Enforcement Officers.

Maryland does not currently have sufficient statutory limits on the use of force by police. SB626 would establish a statewide standard for the use of force and deadly force by Law Enforcement Officers. It would require officers to exhaust all other reasonable alternatives before resorting to the use of force. Every year in America, police shoot and kill more than 1,000 people.¹ SB 626 defines deadly force to include firing at a person and using choke holds. The misuse of this type of force by police not only causes death and injury to the person involved, there are ripple effects throughout the community, resulting in reduced public confidence in policing that inhibits the ability of departments to effectively do their job.

Also, SB 626 creates a civil cause of action for people who are injured by officers who violate those use of force standards. This element of the bill is a step toward creating accountability on behalf of victims and families impacted by unnecessary use of force by the police. We see in many communities, the impact of violence by police has created barriers and rendered situations where police cannot rely on community members to assist in helping to solve crime.

Furthermore, SB 626 will mandate that all law enforcement agencies across the state establish, maintain and implement use of force policies consistent with these statewide standards. All communities in Maryland deserve to know that they will be protected by police, not harmed.

The Maryland General Assembly should act now to ensure that deadly force is prohibited for use by Law Enforcement Officers except in cases of imminent threat of death or serious injury. By enacting SB 626, the General Assembly will make great strides to increasing public confidence in policing in Maryland and will help to prevent future deadly encounters between police and citizens.

Sincerely,
Melissa Ladd
State Legislative Lead
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, Maryland Chapter

¹ [Mapping Police Violence 2013–2019, https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/](https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/) (accessed June 4, 2020), and U.S. Census Bureau, “National Population by Characteristics, 2010–2019” datasets