



**SB 0864 -- Oppose**  
Public Safety - Task Force on Preventing and  
Countering Domestic Terrorism  
Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Chair Smith and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

**The Silver Spring Justice Coalition opposes SB 0864, Public Safety - Task Force on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism.**

The Silver Spring Justice Coalition (SSJC) envisions a county where harm by police is eliminated, while community and individuals are empowered. SSJC aims to reduce the presence of police in our communities; eliminate violence and harm by police; establish transparency and accountability; and redirect public funds toward community needs.

SB 0864 will cause harm to the communities it purports to protect, chill First Amendment rights, and take the state in the wrong direction.

In creating this task force, the legislature raises the specter of terrorists in our midst. While neither terrorism nor extremism is defined in the bill, we have seen throughout our history and today, these terms being used by law enforcement most frequently against Muslims and racial justice activists. We have no doubt that the recommendations made by this task force will create additional police powers, including surveillance, which will be deployed against communities that are already harassed by police, and social justice advocates.

SB 0864 provides a slippery slope for lawmakers and law enforcement to devise new ways to criminalize peaceful protest. Senator Ferguson illustrated how this will happen a few days ago on the floor of the Senate. He purposefully conflated two events: receiving a threatening letter, and a peaceful protest organized by SSJC. He labeled our car caravan an act of 'intimidation.' Carlean Ponder, on behalf of SSJC and the Montgomery County Defund Policing & Invest in Communities Coalition, explained why this raises serious concerns:

*"With his choice of words, Sen. Ferguson has aligned himself with those who seek to vilify protests on behalf of Black lives... Sen. Ferguson's attack on free speech on the Maryland Senate Floor is significant because of the nation's history of using law enforcement to arrest, beat, and even kill civil rights protestors."*

Finally, if "The General Assembly is committed to ending the spread of hate, bigotry, and harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic as defined by law," as described in the "whereas" section of the bill, it should adopt the strongest police reform measures possible to protect Marylanders most often harassed and harmed by police violence.

**The Silver Spring Justice Coalition urges the Judicial Proceedings Committee to reject SB 0864.**

*Submitted for the Silver Spring Justice Coalition by Sue Udry, sue@rightsanddissent.org  
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