

February 4, 2021

Ellie Meyerstein  
Rockville, MD 20852

**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:** Ellie Meyerstein

My name is Ellie Meyerstein and I am a first year student at Walter Johnson High School. I live in Rockville, District 17, and I am a member of Bonimot Tzedek, a social justice organization for Jewish teens. I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB627, Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline.

Growing up Jewish and going to a Jewish camp has taught me that helping others is a clear expression of Jewish values. One of the most important things I've learned is that when you see injustice in the world, you have to do something about it. Remaining silent is the same as allowing the injustice to continue. Several years ago at my camp, Habonim Dror Camp Moshava, we played a game that really taught me about the discrimination that people of color face every day. We were split into a few different groups, each with their own color. Everyone put on a shirt with their group's color and the game was to try and get from one end of the camp to the other. The counselors had flashlights and if they caught you with their flashlight, you had to start over. As we played, it was clear that the counselors were discriminating against a certain group and completely ignoring the other campers. The whole point of the game was to show us how police target people of color, just because they're not white. After the game was over we had a discussion about who was getting sent back over and over again and why. It was because of the color of their t-shirt. This was the first time I was really aware of the racial discrimination that people of color constantly face just because of their skin color. And unlike a t-shirt, that's not something they can change.

LEOBR is allowing police officers in Maryland to continue their race-based discrimination by not holding them accountable for misconduct and brutality. This law is considered one of the most extreme Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights in the country and it's time that we did something about it.<sup>1</sup> Even though I am white and therefore am not as impacted by this law as people of color, one of the most important Jewish values that I've learned is to act to protect those who are most mistreated in society.

The Maryland General Assembly must repeal LEOBR in order to rebuild a justice system that is not systemically racist. Black people and people of color are unfairly targeted by police, and police officers rarely face consequences or adequate misconduct investigations because of LEOBR. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB627. It is time to repeal LEOBR.**

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<sup>1</sup> Amanuel, Yanet. "Opinion: One step Maryland can take to improve policing." *The Washington Post*. September 11, 2020.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/local-opinions/one-step-maryland-can-take-to-improve-policing/2020/09/10/ea34e002-ed33-11ea-99a1-71343d03bc29\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/local-opinions/one-step-maryland-can-take-to-improve-policing/2020/09/10/ea34e002-ed33-11ea-99a1-71343d03bc29_story.html).