



Columbia Democratic Club Testimony on **Anton's Law- HB0120/SB0178 Legislative Committee/ Criminal Justice Issues Team**

Bill Sponsors: Senator: **Carter**, Delegate: **Acevero and Barron**

Committee: **Judiciary**

Persons Submitting: **Meagan Braganca, Legislative Chair**

Position: Favorable

The Columbia Democratic Club supports Anton's Law (SB0178, HB0120), a measure establishing that a record relating to an administrative or criminal investigation of misconduct by a law enforcement officer is not a personnel record for purposes of certain provisions of the Public Information Act and further limiting the conditions under which a custodian may deny inspection of records relating to an administrative or criminal investigation of misconduct by a law enforcement officer.

The Columbia Democratic Club is the oldest and most active Democratic organization in Howard County, including more than 500 Maryland residents committed to electing Democratic candidates and advancing progressive ideas. (<https://www.facebook.com/columbiademclub>)

We commend Delegates Acevero and Barron for introducing this bill named after Anton Black, a 19-year-old boy who was murdered by police in September of 2018. His gruesome murder as described by his Father no one should experience and we share his family's outrage.

Anton's family describe the incredible obstacles they faced as they tried to access the Maryland State Police and Medical Examiner's report. If enacted, formal complaints to review such information, which are sealed from the public because they are considered "personal records", would be subject to the Maryland Public Information Act.

Those who object to this legislation including the police unions suggest that release of these records would make police officers subject to levels of scrutiny no other government employees face. We disagree.

We believe that this bill will actually level the playing field and remove the secrecy and lack of transparency in the law enforcement community that has prevented access to critical records. Furthermore, no other group of government employees has a greater chance of a violent encounter with the public, especially for black and brown people, leading to tragic death.

Police officers as public servants are expected to protect the public, and usually they do. However, all parties must have the right to information pertaining to misconduct by officers when it occurs. Greater transparency would restore an element of confidence in public policing.

In his testimony, Anton Black's Father said, when Webster and the other men subdued his son, the last thing he said as his eyes hemorrhaged and body turned blue, was "Mommy, don't let them kill me."

The Columbia Democratic Club urges you to pass SB0178 and improve transparency and accountability in Maryland.

Please support [Anton's Law](#), HB0120/SB0178, as written.

Thank you.

- CDC legislative committee - criminal justice Issues team
- Jake Burdett, CDC President

Columbia Democratic Club