MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE COALITION

TESTIMONY FOR HB0194
CRIMINAL PROCEDURE -POLICE OFFICERS AND PUBLIC DEFENDERS – IMPLICIT BIAS – TESTING, TRAINING, AND EVALUATION

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Wells
Committee: Judiciary
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0194 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

We would all like to feel that the police officers that we see are always there to support us, and that if anything bad ever happened, the public defender would take our case and work hard to get our voice heard. But, it's not always like that for people of color, or LBGTQ youths, or immigrants, or those who don't speak English. Sometimes what they see is bias and they are railroaded into an outcome that they could have never imagined. For them, and for all the people who are marginalized by those with more power, we need to start the process of weeding out the bias.

This bill, if passed, would require all public defenders receive training to address implicit bias, and then to be evaluated to measure the results of the training. It also would require, for entrance-level police training at the state, county, or municipal level, that the training program include implicit bias training. The police officer would then be evaluated to measure the results of the training. All the results would be available to the public by request, or on the agency's website.

Implicit bias is something that everyone has. It is even more critical for those who can control, through their action or inaction, the lives and freedoms of others. We must do the work to weed out the bias.

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