

**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2021**

HB 139 – Law Enforcement Officers -- Use of Force

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and Committee members,

My name is Beth MacKenzie and I live in Cheverly, Maryland. I'm formally submitting my written testimony in support of HB 139 on Use of Force.

As you know, Maryland does not have statutory limits on use of force, and the Supreme Court cases fail to adequately protect the lives and safety of Maryland residents. Instead of merely codifying *Graham* and *Garner* into state law, we must elevate the "objectively reasonable" standard to prohibit officers from using force unless it is **necessary** as a last resort, under the totality of the circumstances, after the officer has exhausted de-escalation and other reasonable alternatives. Although there are other necessary components to a robust use of force statute, failing to change the legal standard will maintain the status quo and let officers remain unaccountable for the harm they cause.

As a former elected official in a small municipality, we have many different police departments responding to calls in our jurisdiction. The lack of statewide policy means that there is no consistent policy in our town. Providing a statewide policy would allow for clarity and structure needed to ensure that any officer that responds to a call is working under the same expectations and consequences if those expectations are not met.

Now is the time for a statewide use of force standard that holds officers accountable when they use unlawful force, and ensures that officers will do everything they need to do in order to preserve human life. I urge a favorable vote on HB 139.

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