



Montgomery County Young Democrats Testimony to House Judiciary Committee in Support of HB 151-Repeal of the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights February 9, 2021

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary,

Thank you for receiving our testimony. We, the Montgomery County Young Democrats, are an organization of young Democrats ages 14-34 who are working to make Montgomery County and Maryland better places to live, with freedom, opportunity, and justice for all. Our testimony is in support of HB 151 (sponsored by Delegate Gabriel Acevero) which would repeal the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights, help reform policing, and stop police brutality.

The Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights (LEOBR) was adopted in 1974 and is one of the most restrictive in the country. It requires that other officers conduct investigations of police misconduct or brutality, rather than independent actors (unless the Maryland Governor calls for one). LEOBR further bans interview techniques that police routinely use on suspects, including having more than one person questioning the officer. Police officers accused of misconduct have five days to get a lawyer before they are questioned. LEOBR also includes protections against complaints against officers who abuse their power.

Additionally LEOBR limits what discipline can be imposed for misconduct and sets strict time limits on making complaints, including for police brutality. Finally, it allows police disciplinary records to be expunged-completely erased. It gives police officers special privileges that ordinary people do not get and makes it very difficult for them to be held accountable. This means that only a small number of complaints actually result in disciplinary actions, even when they are completely justified.

In the past Baltimore police commissioners have repeatedly complained LEOBR makes it too hard to fire bad police officers. The American Civil Liberties Union and many other

organizations have called for its repeal. The Baltimore Sun has published an editorial in favor. And in October 2020, the House of Delegates working group voted 9-5 to recommend repealing this law.

Police officers should be held accountable for their misconduct, especially for police brutality, and LEOBR ensures that bad officers stay on the force and continue to abuse their power. The murder of George Floyd last summer horrified us all and demonstrated how important it is for police to be held to a high standard. LEOBR blocks most attempts to do this, or throws up obstacles to people with complaints, and just delays the process. And justice delayed is justice denied.

HB 151 would repeal this law and make it easier to hold police officers responsible for their bad behavior, and to punish them if needed. Many police officers are brave and do everything in their power to protect and serve, but some wield their authority as a tool of oppression. This state of affairs must not continue.

The Montgomery County Young Democrats urge you to vote for HB 151. Please reach out to us at mocoyoungdems@gmail.com if you have any questions.