

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

**HB 120 – Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement
Officers (Anton’s Law)**

FAVORABLE

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

My name is Beth MacKenzie and I live in Cheverly, Maryland. I am testifying in support of HB 120 (Anton’s Law).

The state of Maryland ranks among the least transparent states in regards to police misconduct complaints. Twenty-nine other states make disclosure of complaint files more accessible to the public. Even in so-called conservative states such as Alabama, Georgia, and Arizona, police disciplinary records are generally available to the public.

Once a citizen in our state files a complaint of police misconduct, they are unable to access the adjudication process in relation to their complaint. The only information they can obtain is the disciplinary outcome; one is unable to assess whether the department conducted a thorough or lackluster investigation of their complaint. This is due to the complaint file being considered a “personnel record” under Maryland’s Public Information Act, and personnel records may never be disclosed.

Not only does Maryland have over 100 different law enforcement agencies our proximity to four other states allows for officers that are disciplined in one jurisdiction to jump to another department with ease. It is for this reason that Anton’s law is incredibly important. Departments hiring a lateral officer need to be able to access the disciplinary files of an officer applying to join their force. Without this disclosure, an officer’s records are shielded and they can move between agencies without consequence. Communities have the right to know if the armed officers in their community have a track record of misconduct.

We are pushing for the expeditious and timely passage of HB 120 as a “Common-Sense” measure designed to help identify police misconduct patterns and root out bad actors before more Black and Brown people will be brutalized, assaulted, and killed in our communities. In addition, HB 120 will help build trust between the community and Law-Enforcement. To do that, we must have a more transparent and accountable system to the citizenry that funds it.

I urge a favorable vote on HB 120

Beth MacKenzie
epowellmackenzie@gmail.com