

February 9, 2021



Joanna Silver
Silver Spring, MD 20902

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB151
Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Joanna Silver, on behalf of Jews United for Justice

My name is Joanna Silver and I live in Silver Spring, in District 18. I am active in a number of social justice organizations in Montgomery County, all of which support HB151, but I am here to testify in support of repealing the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ organizes more than 5,500 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice.

Jewish values guide the work we do at JUFJ, and one of these values, taught by the scholar Hillel, is that you should not separate yourself from the community. The Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights separates law enforcement from the community it is sworn to protect.

Because of LEOBR, police officers in Maryland operate under their own system of rules; a system that allows them to act with impunity. They enjoy special rights that are not available to other public sector employees. They police themselves, with no citizen involvement. They shield themselves from accountability, leaving the community they are supposed to protect, with no recourse and no voice.

My community in Montgomery County has seen this play out over and over again when police officers have harmed and killed our neighbors, among them Robert White, Finan Berhe, and most recently, Kwamena Ocran. We sit by powerless, while the officers remain on the force, shielded by this perversely named bill of rights.

JUFJ supports a full repeal of LEOBR because the system that LEOBR created is broken and cannot be fixed. However, we must also prevent local jurisdictions from replicating LEOBR; we must ensure that law enforcement officers are treated similarly to other public sector employees and that civilians can participate in holding their police departments accountable to their communities.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on HB151. Thank you.