

Testimony in Support of HB 120
House Judiciary Committee

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Good afternoon Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chairman Atterbeary and members of the House Judiciary Committee. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to testify in support of "Anton's Law" (MPIA). I live in Mt. Rainier and am a resident of Prince George's County since 1979. I have three children who have graduated from the public high schools. I have been a member of the American Public Health Association (APHA) for 40 years and practiced medicine in the county at Prince George's Hospital Center from 1996 until 2015. Since my retirement I have volunteered in a free clinic now located in Seat Pleasant and also volunteered with the Participatory Defense Committee of Life After Release which is located in Camp Springs.

Early on in my time in Prince George's County I was involved with Amnesty International and the campaigns for police accountability. The report "Driving While Black" was an early review of the arrests that led to incarceration for many residents. A more recent study was published in the *Journal of Urban Health* in 2016 entitled "Social Movements against Racist Police Brutality and Department of Justice Intervention in Prince George's County Maryland". The need for police accountability persists unfortunately.

Today, Maryland ranks among the least transparent states in regards to police misconduct complaints and among the few that still have the statutes like LEOBOR that allow officers privilege not accorded to other residents. . Twenty-nine other states make disclosure of complaint files more accessible to the public. When 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.

We see cases where officers have engaged repeatedly in misconduct, even criminal misconduct that was known to the department, but the episodes were swept under the rug. How is the community to place any trust in law enforcement when they are not held accountable? We cannot continue to allow officers who bring personal bias and bigotry to the job to prey on our community. Hiding "red flag" incidents in "personnel" files is an impediment to obtaining justice for families and the community at large. Transparency is critical. We have one more time to pass legislation that will protect our community. Thank you.

