

Walter Lomax Testimony in Support of House Bill 120
House Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2021

My name is Walter Lomax and I spent 39 years in prison because of police misconduct. I strongly support House Bill 120 because transparency is the first step in addressing law enforcement accountability.

I have such appreciation for the work of law enforcement. You may recall that I had a heart attack right before a hearing before this committee on the exoneree compensation bill last year. A state trooper and Frederick County Sheriff saved my life, and kept fighting for me when others might have given up. I would not be here today without them.

Most law enforcement are good people like those two officers who saved me. They want to do the right thing. The problem is that the system allows the bad ones to keep doing illegal and unethical things.

I was wrongfully convicted because police used suggestive lineups and withheld evidence that could have helped my case. The officers didn't testify at my trial because they knew they were framing me. It was decades before I learned that my conviction was not a mistake--police set me up.

That happened a long time ago, but it is still happening. One of my nephews was convicted of attempted murder in 2011 and is serving 25 years because a detective lied about seeing him shoot the victim. His statements are contradicted by video surveillance and witnesses who described a shooter who looks nothing like my nephew. This detective in his case went on to be federally convicted as part of the Gun Trace Task Force. Because it is so difficult to overturn a wrongful conviction my nephew is still fighting his case in prison.

This detective had a bad reputation and people complained about his illegal conduct. If police misconduct records were open, maybe he could have been stopped sooner. My nephew's lawyer could have raised doubts about his testimony at trial.

Shedding light on police discipline records builds public confidence in good officers and deters bad cops from brutalizing and wrongfully convicting people. I hope that you will vote in support of House Bill 120.

Thank you.