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District 13

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT, WITH AMENDMENTS, OF SB 627, Law Enforcement Officers'
Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline

3/22/2021

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

FROM: Ayla Hurley

Chair Clippinger and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Ayla Hurley, I live in Columbia, Maryland, and I am writing to support SB 627, the repeal of the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights, with amendments.

A meaningful repeal of the LEOBR has to include meaningful civilian participation over the discipline of law enforcement, which SB 627, as amended, would not do. Instead, as currently amended, SB 627 would only provide civilian participation in an internal police procedure. Adding two civilians to a three-person hearing board doesn't bring about the real justice that Marylanders so desperately need. SB 627, as amended, also keeps intact the hearing board structure that disincentivizes police chiefs from disciplining police officers. Real reform can only happen when the community has the opportunity to have real power over the discipline process of the police officers that are paid to protect and serve them.

Maryland law enforcement officers should not be protected against consequences simply because they are law enforcement officers. If anything, they should be held to much more stringent rules of conduct than the average citizen. Law enforcement officers are meant to prevent violent crime, not perpetrate it, and if any are allowed to do so without repercussions, as the LEOBR grants them the ability to do, then those agents have failed in their duties and those "rights" are unjustly granted. Even a department chief who wants to hold their officers accountable is unable to do so due to the LEOBR. Repealing it is just one step towards rebuilding the respect and trust that law enforcement must re-earn in Maryland communities in 2021.

I urge you to support *meaningful* repeal of the LEOBR and help ensure that Maryland's law enforcement is being held to the highest standards of conduct. I urge the committee to add language allowing localities to establish their own civilian disciplinary boards, with broad powers of oversight, adjudication, and punishment. Additionally, I strongly urge the committee to remove the amendments offered by the FOP, which create an overly-complicated hearing process that offending officers may use to escape discipline.