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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: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern and I am from Chevy Chase in District 16. I am providing this testimony in support of HB151, Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal.

My Jewish tradition teaches me that destroying one life is akin to destroying the entire world. In a world already filled with so much violence, we must move to end police violence and change Maryland laws that prevent us from holding police accountable. JUFJ has joined more than 90 other organizations across Maryland calling on the General Assembly to pass five specific and impactful reforms. One of these is the repeal of the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBR).

Repeal of LEOBR is absolutely necessary to end the racist, corrupt, and inequitable policing that has been taking place in Maryland for far too long. LEOBR provides special protections for police that no other public employee has. These make it difficult, if not impossible, to hold police accountable for even the most egregious misconduct. Police should not have special rights that aid them in avoiding discipline. LEOBR also prevents transparent investigations, since it stipulates that only sworn officers can investigate police misconduct. This creates a culture of impunity that is compounded by the fact that the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) denies the public access to critical information about police misconduct and discipline. For example, look at the 2018 police killing of a Silver Spring man, Robert White z"l, who was walking while Black, unarmed through his neighborhood. To this day, White's community has never learned the details of the investigation, except that the officer still serves on the police force. It is unconscionable that a man has been killed by a public employee, and the public has no oversight over the person who killed him or the process for holding that person accountable.

Jewish tradition says that we are called to be partners in the creation of a more perfect world — in this time, that call is louder than ever. Repealing LEOBR is a step toward that more perfect world we must create together.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB151.