



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIP

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

121 Mystic Avenue, Suite 9
Medford, Massachusetts 02155
T: (781) 393.6985

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Date: February 9, 2021

Re: HB 120 - Maryland Public Information Act (Anton's Law)

Position: SUPPORT

To: The Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Dear Committee Members:

As law enforcement in Ohio, we are writing to express our support for HB 120 in Maryland. We believe that transparency of police misconduct records is benefiting law enforcement in our state and would do the same in Maryland.

In addition to our public safety careers, we are speakers for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP). LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by improving police-community relations.

We urge you to support HB 120, which would make police disciplinary records subject to the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA). Currently, Maryland is among a minority of states that treat such records as strictly confidential. This bill would bring Maryland in line with Ohio, Florida, Georgia, and other states on this issue. We believe that Ohio's example shows that Maryland can pass this legislation and the sky will not fall.

In fact, we believe that this bill would make Maryland police more effective. Without transparency in policing, the public will not trust us, which makes our job harder. Shining a light on officer misconduct and how it is investigated by departments is a necessary first step towards improving police-community trust in Maryland.

Police-community trust is central to public safety. In order for police to prevent and solve crime, we need witnesses to come forward and we need crime survivors to speak to investigators and testify. We cannot do our jobs if the public will not open the door when we come knocking.

LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org

Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

The trust issue is particularly important in communities of color. Police killings of Black people, from George Floyd in Minneapolis to Freddie Gray in Maryland, have sparked national protests. Raising the veil on complaints filed against officers will help to improve cooperation between law enforcement and communities of color.

Finally, opening misconduct records would benefit Maryland's officers directly. It would allow them to see if disciplinary action is fairly administered throughout their department.

We hope that Ohio can be an example for Maryland in improving police-community trust by making police misconduct records available to the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our experience in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Chief Tom Synan
Newtown Police Department, OH

Assistant Chief Tom Thompson (Ret.)
Miamisburg Police Department, OH
Retired Chief, Kettering Health Network Police Department