



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: March 25, 2021

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 599

POSITION: Support

BILL TITLE: Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 – Surplus Military Equipment

This legislation seeks to prohibit a law enforcement agency from obtaining certain weaponized equipment from a federal military surplus program. The program is managed by the Maryland State Police for the state.

Under current law, the federal government has established a federal military surplus program. Under President Obama, there were restrictions placed on what items could be made available to local law enforcement. Current federal guidelines prohibit a law enforcement agency from requesting a grenade launcher, firearm silencers, or weaponized vehicles or Drones. As amended, the items on the list of Senate Bill 599 will allow for the acquisition of armored vehicles which are requested by law enforcement in order to protect lives and minimize the risk of injury to law enforcement or the public. An armored vehicle can be extremely effective at removing innocent persons from harm's way in an active shooter situation, riots, or other dangerous situation. Many of these vehicles provide rescue operations with additional access. In the case of a flood, these vehicles are used for access in deeper standing water to rescue and remove citizens. A drone can provide a viewpoint in a volatile or dangerous situation that otherwise would put a human being at risk. The State Fire Marshal uses drones rather than people to inspect burned out structures for safety. They are also used to provide aerial photos at crash scenes and high-profile incidents. This is much cheaper and safer than using a helicopter with a photographer on board.

Senate Bill 599 specifically establishes equipment that is prohibited from being distributed to Maryland law enforcement agencies. The Department is the single point of contact for the surplus military equipment acquisition program. In addition to the restrictions included in the program, the Department reviews all requests for equipment. If the equipment is on the prohibited list, the request will not be submitted. Additionally, all equipment acquired by the Department for local use can be viewed via a link on our website.

For these reasons, the Department urges the committee to give Senate Bill 599 a favorable report.