

**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee  
February 10, 2021**

**HB 353 – Civil Actions – Violation of Rights – Governmental Liability**

**FAVORABLE**

To Chairman Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and Committee members,

My name is Beverly John. I submit this testimony in support of “HB353 – Civil Actions – Violation of Rights – Governmental Liability.” I am a concerned citizen and member of various coalitions working on criminal justice issues in Prince George’s County and the state.

I am in support of this bill because we have witnessed multiple instances of law enforcement officers in Prince George’s County, MD avoid any accountability (criminal or civil) for their actions while on duty that have resulted in serious bodily injury and in the loss of life of our community members. Complaint after complaint have been filed against officers who have repeatedly caused harm.

Qualified immunity is a complex issue that has been debated by the Supreme Court. The House of Representatives passed The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act (H.R. 7120) last year. And, legislation has been introduced to the Senate for hearings this year. Reforms to this legislation would serve to correct the current abuse of the original intent of the law. What was originally created to protect “government officials” from lawsuits and civil liability has become a shield for “law enforcement officers” who commit acts of excessive and deadly force with impunity. As law enforcement officers rarely face criminal charges for these acts, the families are then left with little to no civil recourse due to qualified immunity.

We need this legislation, in addition to the repeal of the Law Enforcement Officer’s Bill of Rights (HB151) and Use of Force (HB0139) legislation, to begin to truly make meaningful and real change to identify and hold individuals accountable for the terror and trauma they inflict on communities. We urge a favorable vote on HB 353.

Sincerely,  
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