

**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2021**

HB 151– Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights – Repeal

FAVORABLE

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

Thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony in support of HB 151 to repeal Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights - LEOBOR.

My name is Marion Gray-Hopkins, a resident of Upper Marlboro, Maryland. I am a registered voter and actively involved in many organizations whose focus is police reform. The local organizations include Prince Georges County Peoples Coalition for Justice, MCJPA, Community Justice, the president of Coalition of Concerned Mothers which is a grassroots organization comprised of mothers who have lost children primarily to police brutality as well as community violence. Additionally I am an active board member of ACLU- MD affiliate. More importantly I am the voice for my son Gary Hopkins, Jr. who at the young age of 19 had his voice silenced due to being a casualty of police violence on November 27, 1999. He had dreams and aspirations. A fulltime college student who looked forward to contributing in a positive way yet like so many others was denied that opportunity because he came into contact with officers who were judge, jury and executioner.

Maryland LEOBOR enacted in 1972 is considered to be the most extreme in the country. It is a law that clearly protects law enforcement officers by giving them special rights that we as citizens do not get. Our tax dollars pay them to serve and protect us not to kill with impunity. They are literally making life or death decisions. They should not be given extra rights. We want, expect and demand accountability. The senseless killings of our loved ones at the hands of police MUST stop. It saddens me to know that over 21,000 have been killed by police since my sons’ death most of which are disproportionately black and brown people, many unarmed and who suffered from mental illness. The focus on police brutality has been that of high profile cases yet we have impact right here in Maryland. Let’s not forget my son Gary Hopkins, Jr., Anton Black, Freddie Gray, Leonard Shand, William Green, Dale Graham, Amir Brooks, Korryn Gaines, Kevin Cooper, Archie Elliott, and so many more. We are seeing ongoing demonstrations, rallies, and marches because America is tired of the senseless killings by law enforcement.

Maryland must also ensure that when LEOBR is repealed, local jurisdictions cannot just recreate LEOBR at the local level. That is why it is important that this bill prohibits local laws and collective bargaining agreements that conflict with the due process rights and procedures laid out in the bill.

This body has an opportunity to bridge the divide between community and policing by first acknowledging that there is an issue and then taking action to be on the right side of justice when this time in history is written.

My son aspired to be a writer and one of his final college papers he wrote "It takes a village to bring change". The time for change is long overdue...the time is NOW. On behalf of my son, my family,

the many other Maryland victims of police brutality and advocates of police reform hope you will/are a part of the village and urge you to vote favorable to repeal LEOBOR Senate Bill 627.

Thank you.