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Claire Landers  
Baltimore, MD 21209

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HBI20/SBI78**

**Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers  
(Anton's Law)**

**TO:** Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Claire Landers

My name is Claire Landers. I live in Baltimore County, in District 11. I am submitting this testimony in support of HBI20/SBI78, "Anton's Law."

My grandfather was a police lieutenant in the Boston Police Department. "Officer Friendly" actually visited my elementary school annually. I grew up with police officers as neighbors and family friends with whom we enjoyed backyard parties and camping trips. I was comfortable around police officers, in and out of uniform.

And even still, I remember my white parents advising my teenage brother in the 1970s, "If you are ever pulled over by a cop, do whatever they say. You don't know what could happen." They offered this advice after a teenager (white) in our community (98% white) had been killed running away from a Boston Police officer in a local park.

My parents' advice contained a warning that has stuck with me: a police department, like all human endeavors, includes individuals who exhibit the full range of human impulses and behavior--from the very best to the very worst.

I am now a middle-aged suburban resident of Baltimore County for over 20 years. After many years of accruing knowledge about specific incidents of police misconduct in Baltimore and throughout Maryland, I have been morally compelled since 2016 to speak up and advocate before Maryland's law makers about the lack of accountability around police misconduct and our need to bring transparency and oversight to local law enforcement: I believe it is a fundamental issue of

public safety that in 2021 Maryland finally joins 28 other states which already allow some public access around police officers' disciplinary records.

I personally observed some of the trial key figures of the infamous Gun Trace Task Force. I heard testimony with stunning details of brazen misconduct and criminality that the GTTF engaged in for years under the leadership of Sgt. Wayne Jenkins, who was praised, decorated and promoted by his commanders in the Baltimore Police Department. It is critical to underscore now: in Sgt. Jenkins' first two years on the job, a decade before he joined the GTTF, he was the subject of multiple misconduct complaints! We must ask: What enormous damage might have been prevented over the entirety of his "successful" and notorious BPD career if the very troubling pattern of behavior documented in Jenkins' early disciplinary record had been accessible to public scrutiny?

What we know now without a doubt today is that Sgt. Jenkins, the GTTF squad members and other BPD officers relied (and still do) on Maryland's unique restrictions around personnel records to "game the system" and enable their acts of misconduct and fearless criminality.

Currently, Maryland's MPIA is a legal device that underpins a flawed system wherein police are empowered to "police themselves" by investigating complaints and disciplining fellow officers internally. That so very many complaints are categorized "unsustained" is hardly surprising: "unsustained" does not mean "unfounded". It is simply a "catch-all" category that internal affairs investigators frequently use for any and all complaints that do not offer a clear or easy resolution. MPIA ensures this process and all results are concealed from any independent scrutiny, which obscures problem officers who establish patterns of grievous abuse and misconduct.

Officers who engage in patterns of misconduct inflict harm directly onto their victims; they have caused long-term damage, especially within Black and brown communities. They discredit the entire law enforcement profession.

Marylanders who file complaints about officer misconduct deserve to learn whether their complaints were investigated and how they have been resolved.

HB120 will mark a meaningful step forward toward greater transparency and accountability of local law enforcement throughout Maryland.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of HB120/SB178.