

**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,

My name is **Diganta Das**. I live in **Boys**, Maryland, and I am submitting this testimony supporting HB 151 to repeal the Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights (“LEOBR”) and create a streamlined system without the procedural barriers that prevent discipline. This bill is about common sense and racial justice. This repeal will make rogue officers accountable for the violence, abuse, and trauma their actions inflict on the community, often to the Black and Brown Marylanders.

I am concerned about public safety and realize that we cannot achieve that if a section of the vulnerable population is afraid of interaction with police. We have immigrants who serve the people with hard work but face both economic and physical exploitation. They do not feel safe contacting the police because of the community’s experience and the lack of repercussion for the officers when there is misbehavior.

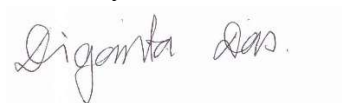
As you know, Maryland was the first state to create this type of law, and Maryland’s LEOBR is one of the most extreme in the country. LEOBR protects officers from accountability by giving them special due process rights beyond Constitutional requirements. For instance, there is no reason why complaints need to go through a hearing board process before officers can be held accountable. As a result of LEOBR’s extra rights, only a few officers receive any discipline at all. In the vast majority of violence and misconduct incidents, the officer receives no discipline at all. LEOBR also allows police chiefs to escape accountability because they can say that the hearing board made the decision, not them. It is necessary to have a transparent and streamlined discipline process when needed that allows us to know who is responsible for misconduct and even violence.

I believe that officers should have the same rights as any other state or local employee. The officers have power in the community – making life or death decisions, they should not be allowed a veil of secrecy. There is no need for these extra rights.

Maryland must also ensure that when LEOBR is repealed, local jurisdictions cannot just recreate LEOBR at the local level.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

HB 151 is a necessary bill so that Maryland finally stops shielding officers from accountability. Now is the time for a full repeal of LEOBR. I urge your favorable vote on HB 151.

Sincerely,



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