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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB 626, Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force
3/22/2021

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
FROM: Ayla Hurley

Chair Clippinger and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Ayla Hurley, I live in Columbia, Maryland, and I am writing to oppose SB 626, the current Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force bill, to create a much watered-down “use of force” policy in our state.

Maryland is one of only nine states that does not define or provide direction regarding “use of force” by law enforcement against others, using only Supreme Court cases *Graham v. Connor* (1989) and *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985). Neither of these provide for Maryland law enforcement: (1) definitions of lethal and non-lethal force; (2) a requirement of lethal force only as a last resort after exhausting all other non-lethal methods of de-escalation; (3) guidance or regulations on specific and dangerous officer behavior, such as frequency of weapon discharges or dangerous body restrictions like chokeholds; (4) or specific regulations against excessive use of force used on Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, who are disproportionately affected by it.

In order to be held accountable for violent and unjust actions, Maryland law enforcement must have a policy that defines what is and is not acceptable behavior for our officers. SB626 falls short of real, meaningful change. I ask that SB626 be modified to look exactly like the Use of Force language in HB670. I applaud the House Judiciary Committee for the Use of Force requirements it designed in HB670. The language in the House bill will create a much stronger statute that will help bring Marylanders real justice as described above. I urge the Committee to vote unfavorable for SB 626 unless amended with HB670’s Use of Force language.