



February 5, 2021

Testimony on SB 0718, *Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)*
House Judiciary Committee
Hearing Date: February 5, 2021

Organization: Sunrise Movement Baltimore
Person Submitting: Katherine McRury
Position: Favorable

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for considering my testimony today. My name is Katherine McRury, a resident of Baltimore, in the neighborhood of Canton. I am a member of Sunrise Movement Baltimore, a movement led by young people fighting against the climate crisis. This testimony represents my support for SB0718, the Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law).

While the safety of our communities is important, it is even more important that communities can trust the people in charge of keeping them safe. Without that trust, policing becomes counterintuitive, making more people feel unsafe. Before trust can be established, however, transparency, honesty, and accountability are necessary. It's unbelievable that someone who files a complaint can't find out how that complaint was investigated, if it was investigated at all. Given the history of police misconduct and abuse of power in this country, it cannot be taken on faith that the result of a complaint is a thorough investigation that puts the needs of the community first. Maryland needs to make complaint records accessible to the public in order to hold police departments accountable for investigating valid complaints from their communities.

While the Sunrise Movement is focused on climate change, we know that this issue intersects with many others, and we want to protect all of our members. I was horrified watching the brutality exhibited by many police officers during this past summer's protests, but that behavior is not limited to high-profile events. We need to have safe, healthy communities where everyone can speak, protest, or even just go for a walk without fearing for their safety, and if that safety is violated by officers they must be able to file a complaint and know whether it was actually investigated with integrity. Most other states allow for police disciplinary records to be released, including more conservative states like Alabama and Georgia, and it's time for Maryland to join them



This bill will maintain the privacy of most police personnel files while allowing for disciplinary records to be released to demonstrate whether complaints are fairly investigated. This will give communities power to hold their police departments accountable, make it easier to find and root out corruption, and bring Maryland up to the standard upheld by most other states. This is a step toward building trust between communities and law enforcement, and it is desperately necessary.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Katherine McRury
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