



**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,

Quaker Voice of Maryland submits this written testimony in support of HB 151 to repeal the Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights (“LEOBR”). Quaker Voice of Maryland was formed by Quaker Meetings throughout the State of Maryland to give Maryland Quakers a more effective voice in state-level issues that speak to our values. Our faith as Quakers includes the commitment to build a more peaceful and equitable society through legislation and policies that affect human dignity, well-being and non-violence. We see this bill as necessary to hold officers accountable when they abuse their powers and inflict violence and trauma on communities anywhere in our State.

LEOBR must be repealed altogether. It wrongly protects officers whose actions have been brutal or even deadly. It prevents communities from investigating misconduct cases. Repeal does not deny the officers constitutional due process. Rather, the statute grants police officers extraordinary rights, well beyond that granted other government employees. These extra, special rights insulate them from responsibility for their actions, and protect them from disciplinary consequences. When officers get away without discipline, particularly when there are multiple and similar complaints filed against them, Maryland fails its citizens and allows abusive officers to continue policing with no accountability. Quaker Voice favors passage of HB 120 also, which would guarantee transparency in the disciplinary process, and public oversight of that process.

This lack of accountability fuels the innumerable cases of brutality that so many Black and Brown Marylanders have faced for decades in numerous communities across the State. As you know, Maryland was the first state to create this type of law, and Maryland’s LEOBR is considered to be the most extreme in the country. Reporting has shown that, in the vast majority of incidents of police violence and misconduct, the officer receives no discipline.

Repealing LEOBR is necessary to advance racial justice and to start reimagining policing. You have the capacity, and responsibility, to see that policing *saves* Black lives and to make the future better for thousands of Marylanders. We ask you to make all Maryland communities strong and safe. A key part of realizing that vision is holding police accountable for their actions when they mistreat Black and Brown community members.

HB 151 is a necessary bill so that Maryland finally stops shielding officers from accountability. Officers have so much power in the community – literally making life or death decisions. They are entitled to the constitutional protections afforded by due process – no less, and no more. We urge a favorable vote on HB 151.

In Light,

Molly Finch
Clerk, Quaker Voice of Maryland