



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

[www.womensdemocraticclub.org](http://www.womensdemocraticclub.org)

**House Bill 188  
No-Knock Warrants – Elimination (Duncan's Act)  
Judiciary Committee – February 9, 2021  
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2021 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

**WDC urges the passage of HB0188 No-Knock Warrants – Elimination (Duncan's Act).** This bill seeks to eliminate no-knock warrants beginning on October 1, 2021. It will also expand the duties of the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission by requiring the development of training and deployment standards for not only members of SWAT teams but also for all other law enforcement officers who conduct no-knock services in the state.

No-knock warrants authorize law enforcement officers to enter a private property without the prior notification or consent of the occupant(s). Between the years of 2010 and 2016, no-knock warrants accounted for approximately 80 civilian deaths nationwide.<sup>1</sup> In Maryland, two-thirds of all SWAT deployments involved forcible entry between the years of 2010 and 2014, according to a report released by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.<sup>2</sup> SWAT team members discharged firearms 99 times, resulting in 9 people being killed and 95 people injured.<sup>3</sup> These numbers may not seem significantly high next to mortality rates associated with other causes, but when race is taken into account, the numbers are alarming.

The Prince George's County Police Department, which serves the largest population of Black residents in Maryland, accounted for one-fourth of the state's total number of SWAT team deployments in 2014.<sup>4</sup> The majority of the deployments were activated to seize illegal drugs and other contraband as opposed to combating threats of violence. This finding is proof that the legacy of the Nixon administration's "war on drugs" campaign is still in effect today, systematically targeting members of predominantly Black communities for mass incarceration in the name of law and order. The ACLU of Maryland reported that African Americans represented 69% of those who died in police custody despite making up only 29% of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://github.com/newsdev/nyt-forcible-entry/blob/master/nyt-forcible-entry-deaths-2010-2016.csv>

<sup>2</sup> <http://goccp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/swat-report-fy2014.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid



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the state's total population.<sup>5</sup> The report also stated that the number of unarmed Blacks who died while encountering police exceeded the total number of all whites who died (33 and 30 people respectively).<sup>6</sup>

Despite the use of body cameras and increased media coverage, racial disparity in victims of police killings has not improved since 2015.<sup>7</sup> Last year, the police killing of Breonna Taylor – a Black woman fatally shot by police officers during the execution of a no-knock search warrant in Louisville, Kentucky – sparked nationwide protests and public outcry for police reform. Currently, Oregon, Florida, and Virginia are the only states to have outlawed no-knock warrants.

WDC stands firmly with civic leaders, advocacy groups, and policymakers in Montgomery County and across the state of Maryland in calling for policy change around the use of search warrants and the use of excessive force. For too long the justice system's pursuit of law and order has failed to function in a manner that prioritizes the preservation of life for all our residents.

**We ask for your support for HB 188 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Respectfully,

Diana Conway  
President

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/md\\_deaths\\_in\\_police\\_encounters.pdf](https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/md_deaths_in_police_encounters.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.yale.edu/2020/10/27/racial-disparity-police-shootings-unchanged-over-5-years>