

ALONZO T. WASHINGTON  
*Legislative District 22*  
Prince George's County

—  
*Vice Chair*  
Ways and Means Committee

—  
Chair, Education Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 131  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3652 · 301-858-3652  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3652  
Fax 410-841-3699 · 301-858-3699  
Alonzo.Washington@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB956 – Criminal Procedure - Law Enforcement Procedures - Use of Force**

HB956 will build on the recent work done by the General Assembly to reform police practices by establishing a “Use of Force” statute for our state.

When a police officer shoots an individual, that officer’s decision to use force or use deadly force should be carefully evaluated to ensure that it was the appropriate choice of action under the circumstances. Over the past couple of years, following the work of the Public Safety & Police Working Group, the Maryland Police Training and Standard Commission improved its use of force evaluation process by issuing a set of best practices and standards for the use of force by law enforcement officers. Much of what is proposed in HB956 comes from these regulations issued by the Commission.

The advantage of HB956 over the Commission’s regulations is that the legislation would have the force of law. Because of its enforceability in a court, an enacted statutory provision would have far more potential to shape police culture than internal police regulations. Right now, Maryland is one of only seven states in the country that **does not** have a use of force provision in its statute.

Ultimately, this legislation will be able to supplement police training requirements by providing statutory guidelines for use of force and a baseline for evaluating conduct that falls outside of those statutory requirements.

This issue hits close to home for me. Last January, a handcuffed, unarmed Prince George’s County man was shot seven times in the front seat of a police cruiser. These types of horrific incidents are all too common in the State of Maryland, and across the country.

Between 2013 and 2019, the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services reported 116 homicides were committed by law enforcement officers, most of which involved the fatal shooting of the subject.

Ensuring the law allows police officers to use deadly force only when such force is necessary and proportionate is critically important to reducing this number of officer-involved homicides, maintaining public safety, and improving accountability and public trust in our police departments.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB956.