

February 5, 2021

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB151
Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights – Repeal

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, members of the Judiciary Committee
FROM: Ioana Stoica

My name is Ioana Stoica and I have been a Maryland resident for most of my life since immigrating to the United States at the age of 11. I have resided in District 21 for the past 5 years. I am writing as a concerned citizen, as a founding member of the Bend the Arc Moral Minyan, and also as a member of Jews United for Justice and of Oseh Shalom Synagogue in Laurel, MD. This testimony is in support of HB151, Repealing of the Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights (LEOBR).

Only sixteen states have LEOBR laws, which give special rights to law enforcement beyond those granted to other citizens by state and federal legislation and by the Constitution. These protections prevent communities from investigating police misconduct, and thus foster mistrust between communities and police. Building trust between police and communities is essential, if law enforcement officers are to perform their function of keeping communities safe; without this foundation, police instead become just another institution that inflicts fear on individuals and that perpetuates injustice.

When officers of the law are held to a different standard than the rest of citizens, the perception that police operates outside the law, and with impunity, escalates. Our criminal justice system is already unjust in how it discriminates against people of color and people of lesser economic means; furthermore, it is a system that incarcerates more people per capita than anywhere else in the world. Meanwhile, Maryland has *the largest discrepancy in incarceration* by race – which perhaps is not a surprise, considering we instituted the first LEOBR laws in the country. It's beyond time to repeal regressive LEOBR laws is now.

I am an immigrant from a formerly communist country, a place in which the police acted with impunity as an arm of the oppressive totalitarian state. Sometimes in reading the news today about the kinds of actions some police forces in the United States engage in, I have flashbacks to the sort of corruption that was the norm back in my country of origin: individuals dying in police custody in unexplained ways, police hiding documents from the public, officers not being held accountable for actions that would send regular civilians to prison, discrimination against people of color or people without monetary means, and more.

However, you, as our democratically elected body, have the power to bring meaningful change to policing in our state, and you can start by repealing LEOBR in our state. So please, consider doing so, for our communities, for the families of victims, and to strengthen our institutions. **I respectfully urge a favorable report for HB151.**

Respectfully,
Ioana Stoica