



**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,

Community Justice supports HB 151 a bill that would repeal the Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights (“LEOBR”) and create a streamlined system without the procedural barriers that prevent discipline. This bill is about racial justice and holding officers accountable for the violence, abuse, and trauma they inflict on the community, mostly Black and Brown residents.

We are a group of organizations and concerned community members who are dedicated to ensuring police accountability in Prince George’s County. Our organization centers and uplifts people of color and those impacted by the criminal legal system.

Maryland’s LEOBR is considered to be the most extreme in the country and allows law enforcement officers special due process rights that go beyond what is required under the Constitution. Officers should have the same rights as any other state or local employee, especially since officers have so much power in the community – literally making life or death decisions. They should not be given extra rights.

LEOBR also allows police chiefs to escape accountability because they can say that it was the hearing board that made the decision, not them so their “hands are tied.” This is why it is so important to have a transparent and streamlined discipline process that allows for us to know exactly who is responsible for holding officers accountable. Across the country, many states have had harrowing stories of police misconduct where officers were not held accountable. Further, in our own state in places like Prince George’s County and Baltimore City, law enforcement officers continue to be given differential treatment at the expense of everyday residents. Maryland cannot continue down this path.

Maryland must also ensure that when LEOBR is repealed, local jurisdictions cannot just recreate LEOBR at the local level. That is why it is important that this bill prohibits local laws and collective bargaining agreements that conflict with the due process rights and procedures laid out in the bill.

HB 151 is a necessary bill so that Maryland finally stops shielding officers from accountability. Now is the time for a full repeal of LEOBR. I urge a favorable vote on HB 151.

Sincerely,

Community Justice
Point of Contact: Seanniece Bamiro, BamiroSA@gmail.com