

**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2021**

**HB 120 – Public Information Act – Personnel Records – Investigations of
Law Enforcement Officers (Anton’s Law)**

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Committee members,

My name is Tawanda Jones and I reside in the 45th Legislative District of Baltimore City, Maryland. I’m formally submitting my written testimony in support of HB 120 (Anton’s Law).

For the last 393 weeks, I have been fighting for justice for my Brother, Tyrone West. Tyrone was brutally murdered by 11-15 officers in broad daylight in a residential neighborhood in my district. For the last 7 and a half years, my family has endured corruption that should be considered criminal, as well as every form of road block you can imagine on our journey to accountability and justice.

Enough is enough! There is no statute of limitations on murder. No one that participates in a murder should be shielded from accountability because of what their occupation is. No One! That includes police officers. They wield so much power, and weapons that they should be held to a higher standard of conduct, not shielded from responsibility for their actions of brutality against citizens. Tyrone deserves Justice. All victims of police brutality do.

The state of Maryland ranks among the least transparent states in regards to police misconduct complaints. Twenty-nine other states make disclosure of complaint files more accessible to the public. Even in so-called conservative states such as Alabama, Georgia, and Arizona, police disciplinary records are generally available to the public.

Once a citizen in our state files a complaint of police misconduct, they are unable to access the adjudication process in relation to their complaint. The only information they can obtain is the disciplinary outcome; one is unable to assess whether the department conducted a thorough or lackluster investigation of their complaint. This is due to the complaint file being considered a “personnel record” under Maryland’s Public Information Act, and personnel records may never be disclosed.

We are pushing for the expeditious and timely passage of HB 120 as a “Common-Sense” measure designed to help identify police misconduct patterns and root out bad actors before more Black and Brown people will be brutalized, assaulted, and killed in our communities. In addition, HB 120 will help build trust between the community and Law Enforcement. To do that, we must have a more transparent and accountable system to the citizenry that funds it.

Sincerely,

Tawanda Jones
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