



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

Submitted by: Jacqueline Robarge, Executive Director, Power Inside, Inc.

I am the Director and Founder of Power Inside, Inc., a twenty year old nonprofit in Baltimore that serves women impacted sexual and gender violence, community-level trauma, substance use, homelessness, and incarceration. We work with 300 women per year through counseling, victims' advocacy, case management, street outreach, and drop-in services. We've assisted thousands of women who have interacted with the police as victims, witnesses, suspects, and everyday citizens. We are one of only a handful of organizations in the country that provides specific programming for women who are survivors of sexual violence and misconduct by police officers.

We support HB 120 because when women file complaints after experiencing police officer violence or misconduct they are unable to access the adjudication process in relation to their complaint.

We have assisted women to submit complaints regarding police officers who have committed sexual assault, sexual harassment, public strip searches, beatings, threats, witness intimidation, and mishandling of rape reports. Sexually violent police officers often repeat misconduct against the same women over and over again and these officers are well known in the community for this behavior. Yet, even if there are multiple complaints against an officer for sexual misconduct, the only information survivors can obtain is the disciplinary outcome; they never can learn if the police department conducted a thorough investigation of the complaint. In 20 years, we have NEVER had a client receive even information of a disciplinary outcome from a complaint of this kind—either there was no investigation or the officer was never disciplined.

Passage of HB 120 would address systemic problems found by the US Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation of the Baltimore Police Department. The DOJ found that the BPD did not sufficiently address complaints of officers coercing sex from people in the sex trade and noted,

“Unfortunately, we not only found evidence of this conduct in BPD’s internal affairs files, it appeared that the Department failed to adequately investigate allegations of such conduct, allowing it to recur.”

A timely passage of HB 120 will allow our clients and the public to know which officers are hurting people and causing emotional, physical, and sexual harm and community-level trauma. Unless we change the law, lack of transparency will continue to inflict more trauma on the victims of misconduct and sews the seeds of community mistrust. HB 120 is a matter of protecting public safety and the rights of victims. Anton's Law is designed to help identify police misconduct patterns and root out bad actors before more Black and Brown people are brutalized, raped, assaulted, and killed in our communities.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge you to issue a FAVORABLE report for HB 120.