

THE HONORABLE CARL O. SNOWDEN
FORMER CIVIL RIGHTS DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF THE MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee regarding SB47-Police Pensions. I am pleased on behalf of the Caucus of African-American Leaders a consortium of statewide African-American organizations and elected officials who seek to improve police and community relations. SB47 is an important piece of legislation that if enacted will go a long way to curbing police misconduct and malfeasance. As a former civil rights director for the Office of the Maryland Attorney General, I can attest to the need for this legislation both from a professional and personal point of view.

There is little doubt that police officers have broken the law and in some have even continued to receive their pensions despite that they did not honor the oath of office that they took. As a former member of the Office of the Attorney General, I saw first-hand these abuses. After leaving the Office of the Attorney General, I found myself the subject of misconduct by members of the Anne Arundel County Police Department who had the direction of a county executive used their authority to commit acts that included accessing my medical records. Later with the help of the Maryland Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, we were able to bring a successful action against that disgraced county executive.

However, because police officers were given immunity in the criminal case involving the aforementioned county executive, many of the wrongdoings committed by the police were never punished and in at least one case I am aware that police officer was permitted to retire with full benefits and a lifetime pension. The same is true of another Annapolis police officer who allegedly took money from a citizen and while he was required to pay it back, he was not prosecuted for this alleged crime, but allowed to retire with a lifetime pension. I cite these cases as evidence of the need for SB47.

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Jill Carter for her leadership and tenacity. The Maryland General Assembly is to be commended for the sweeping police reform bills in 2021. We believe that the 2022 General Assembly session will not only allow for the tweaking of previously passed bills but the ongoing need for police reform.

Again, on behalf of the Caucus of African-American Leaders, its Public Safety Chair Joshua Hatch, I thank the committee for allowing us an opportunity to testify on behalf of this important legislation.

-Carl Snowden
Snowdencarl23@gmail.com
443-871-5656