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Favorable with Amendments
SB0896-Office of the Attorney General – Independent Investigations – Revisions
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My name is Charlene Rock-Foster, a resident of Baltimore City, and I support, with amendments SB 896.

From what I interpreted from the proposed bill, once the AG Independent Investigations Division is complete with an investigation into allegations of Police Brutality resulting in death and/or abuse of civil rights; it is then turned over to the respective State's Attorney's office for prosecution. My amendment is for the prosecution to remain with the Attorney General's Office.

I suggested the amendment due to the current practice of State's Attorney's being the lead Prosecutor on police brutality cases, which has not helped victims of police brutality. Currently, when an act of police brutality occurs and results in the death of an individual, a homicide detective is assigned to the case as well as a State's Attorney. The relationship between the State's Attorney's offices and Police Departments/FOP within the state of Maryland is too close, which does provide opportunities to cover up police misconduct. We can hold up high profile cases like Freddie Gray, Tyrone West, and Anton Black to see the evidence that the State's Attorney's roles with offending officers and investigators to ensure no proper prosecution took place. When charges are sought against police officers, the investigative techniques utilized, as well as witness tampering is evident. This occurs by both Detectives and State's Attorney members. They exclude valid witnesses and their testimony if they feel it would lead to the proper prosecution of, and removal of tainted police officers.

The only recent cases that were properly prosecuted were handed over to the US Attorney's office, most likely due to the entanglements between the State's Attorney's Office(s) and Police Department(s). It would be ideal to have this prosecutorial power remain inside the Attorney General's purview, since they do not currently have an ongoing working relationship with police departments. The perceived entanglements don't seem to exist there either.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge a favorable with amendments report on SB 896. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.