



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB441
Baltimore City - Civilian Review Board
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Lydia Walther-Rodriguez, On Behalf of CASA

February 16, 2022

Dear Honorable Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

CASA is pleased to provide favorable testimony in support of **SB441, Baltimore City - Civilian Review Board**. CASA is the largest member-led immigrant advocacy and direct services organization in the state of Maryland and in the Mid-Atlantic region, serving over 123,000 Black and Brown immigrants and working class families.

CASA's membership is disproportionately impacted, in comparison to their white counterparts, by police violence. CASA members have consistently been before the committee testifying to their personal accounts of police misconduct, abuse, and brutality. For immigrant families in particular, this unjust interactions with police often go unaccounted for and unreported due distrust in the police stemming from a long history of police misconduct going without accountability and proper oversight. This is a trend with CASA members and the immigrant community at large, who have suffered police misconduct.

Due to the above trends, CASA, led by its members, have joined coalition efforts in advocating for police reform and civilian oversight for over a decade. CASA is an active member of the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability (MCJPA), a statewide coalition of over 90 organizations, and the Campaign for Justice Safety and Jobs (CJSJ), a Baltimore based coalition of over 30 organizations. Both coalitions are united to achieve meaningful police reform in Baltimore City and Maryland as a whole.

CASA stands firmly with both coalitions' efforts in support of SB441 - as this is our opportunity to achieve maximum civilian oversight and police accountability by building upon the infrastructure and expertise of the existing Baltimore City Civilian Review Board.

The responsibilities and functions of the Baltimore City Civilian Review Board, as established in the 1999 statute, are largely duplicative of those required of a new police accountability board. However, the police accountability boards have certain features that Baltimore's CRB currently does not have, and could bring about larger empowerment of the CRB including the oversight over broader categories of complaints, more opportunities for the CRB to influence the internal disciplinary process, and adequate funding for the CRB - are some examples.

Strengthening the CRB through SB441, will bring about greater police accountability- through a more powerful mechanism of civilian oversight - and encourage CASA members, and the community at large to come forward with their accounts of police misconduct. For all of those reasons, **CASA strongly urges a favorable support of SB441.**

Lydia Walther-Rodriguez

Baltimore & Central Maryland Region Director, CASA