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March 21st, 2023  
The House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Ben Barnes  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Senate Bill 18 - Police Recruitment and Retention Workgroup**

Dear Chairman Barnes and members of the Committee,

Governor Moore has announced that public safety will be one of his top priorities. One of the crucial public safety issues at the moment is the fact that virtually every police department in the State is experiencing a record rate of vacancies among their uniformed officers. As a result, Maryland has, in effect, defunded its police without even passing a bill to implement such a policy.

In the Judicial Proceedings Committee, we heard testimony from the Chief of Police of Baltimore City stating that the Baltimore City Police Department currently has 465 vacancies. I understand from the Baltimore County Fraternal Order of Police that the Baltimore County Police Department has about 225 vacancies at this time. Around the State, similar record-breaking vacancies can be observed at many police departments.

The Baltimore Sun recently published an article about U. S. District Court Judge James K. Bredar, who is overseeing the policing Consent Decree between the City and the federal Justice Department, announced that “insufficient staffing is the Police Department’s biggest obstacle to achieving compliance with the Consent Decree. Judge Bredar stated that “it’s essential” that the Police Department “stop the bleeding” in terms of its recruitment and retention.

Senate Bill 18 and the cross-file, House Bill 308 establishes a workgroup to better understand and mitigate the statewide decline in police officer recruitment and retention. There were several amendments to refine who will be on the work group, add cosponsors, and explore a “from high school-to-academy” apprenticeship initiative. This bill passed the Senate unanimously.

As elected officials, we have a responsibility to enact policies that empower our institutions of public safety to protect us in a legal and professional manner. Senate Bill 18/ House Bill 308 will better inform us on how to do so.

I appreciate the Committee’s consideration of Senate Bill 18 and will be more than happy to answer any follow-up questions the Committee may have.