

**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Tuesday, February 14th, 2023**

**SB 285 - County Police Accountability Boards – Investigation of Complaints of Police**

**Misconduct**

**FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee,

My name is Beverly John. I am a Maryland resident writing in support of SB 285. I thank the General Assembly for the work during the 2021 session to pass HB670 (Maryland Police Accountability Act – MPAA) which mandated Maryland counties to establish police accountability boards (PABs). I am a member of the Prince George’s County Coalition for Police Accountability that worked with our county officials to implement HB670. We found that implementation of HB 670 throughout the past year has made it clear that legislation is needed to clarify the authority local governing bodies can hold to empower their PAB’s. For local PABs to follow through on the fundamental goals of the MPAA, the legislature must clarify that local bodies can give their PABs the power to conduct independent investigations into misconduct complaints. Without this clarification, local PABs are left to assess investigations that have been conducted by the law enforcement agency. But, since there is no mandate for the police to investigate every complaint, the PAB is left to rely on incomplete data.

We are proud of the work our Coalition supported to implement our PAB. However, we know that it is not as strong as it needs to be. A strong PAB must be developed to adequately address the needs and concerns of our community. Without investigatory and subpoena powers, our PAB (and others) is disadvantaged in their ability to fulfill their main function to accurately assess the quality of police discipline. This is a public safety issue and must be addressed to build trust between the community and law enforcement.

There are families in our Coalition who have been denied justice as early as 30 years ago due to the Law Enforcement Officer’s Bill of Rights (LEOBR) which allowed law enforcement to traumatize, seriously injure and kill our residents without any transparent investigation or recourse. The MPAA was passed as a repeal of LEOBR. We need PABs to hold investigatory and subpoena powers to work toward fair and independent assessment of the complaints.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 285.

Appreciatively,

Beverly John

4915 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Hyattsville, MD 20781

2/13/2023