



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 290
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, February 14, 2023

My name is Dr. Robert Veiga. I am a resident of Silver Spring, in District 20, and I am testifying as co-chair of the Silver Spring Justice Coalition in support of SB 290, with amendments.

The Silver Spring Justice Coalition is a coalition of community members, faith groups, and civil and human rights organizations from throughout Montgomery County committed to eliminating harm caused by police and empowering those communities most affected by policing. In furtherance of this goal, we support giving the Attorney General's Independent Investigations Division the authority to prosecute police-involved killings and injuries likely to result in death. Our current system of accountability for police violence, particularly violence against Black men, is not working, and a structural change is needed.

We all know how rare it is for a police officer to be prosecuted for harming a member of our community. The Mapping Police Violence project reports that less than 2% of all police killings from 2013-2020 resulted in prosecutions. In Montgomery County, police killed twelve people in the past five years and the only prosecution we've had was of an officer from a law enforcement agency outside of Montgomery County who killed two people when he was off-duty and acting in a private capacity. Unfortunately, the formation of the Independent Investigations Division hasn't changed a thing; since its formation in 2021, the IID has investigated 29 police-involved killings in Maryland and not a single one has resulted in a prosecution by a local state's attorney. Not surprisingly, over 60% of these killings have been of Black people, while they make up just over 30% of our population.

While we have no illusions that the IID's power to prosecute police will suddenly reverse this shameful history, we believe that an independent office whose sole job is to investigate and prosecute these cases will be more likely to bring justice to our communities than we receive under the current system.

That said, we still believe the local state's attorney should be allowed to prosecute a case if the IID decides not to, and we ask the Sponsor to amend the bill to add this critical backstop. Given

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the complete absence of justice in cases of police violence, it is essential that every option remain available to make the community whole. This is a fundamental matter of racial equity and public safety for all of us. .

For these reasons I respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report, with our requested amendment.