



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 0285

**County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police
Misconduct
FAVORABLE**

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair, Senator Cheryl Kagan and members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., Co-Director, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network

DATE: February 14, 2023

The Episcopal Church, in its 2018 General Convention resolution on police violence and racism, stated, “that while we honor and raise up the work of dedicated police officers who put their lives on the line to serve and protect, we also acknowledge the numerous inexcusable deaths and intimidation of people of color at the hands of law enforcement personnel in communities all over the United States”

Episcopalians are further urged to “join community and grassroots leaders in advocating ... substantive and mandatory change in police departments and policing and to allocate resources for community-based models of safety, support and prevention.” In that spirit, the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland and its member parishes strongly urge a favorable report on this act.

Since the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore in 2015 the Maryland General Assembly has moved steadily to empower communities to hold police officers to account.

This bill will give accountability boards the additional power that they need to investigate willful acts of omission and commission and obstruction of the truth.

We also support this bill because we know that an incremental approach will not ultimately solve the urgent problem of police violence nor will it have a mitigating impact on the systemic racism that feeds and sustains it. Only a comprehensive approach will do, and we applaud the Judicial Procedures Committee for considering just that. Ending police violence can only benefit everyone. Enacting these measures would be a great next step. Black people have suffered under this system for far too long.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report