

Written Testimony for the Maryland Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings

February 14, 2023

**SB285 – County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct
Favorable**

Dear Chairman Smith and Vice-Chair Waldstreicher,

In recent years, Maryland has made progress in reforming our criminal justice system and increasing police accountability. I commend the legislature on passing the law which mandated Police Accountability Boards be created in every jurisdiction. I was actively involved in advocating for legislation that created the PAB in Frederick County. Consequently, we have had an excellent response of highly qualified people willing to serve on our PAB to review complaints of police misconduct.

This testimony is to urge your committee to strengthen the existing law by making it clear that each jurisdiction can empower their PAB be to hold its own investigations i.e. issue subpoenas, call witnesses and conduct an investigation prior to the complaint being heard by the Administrative Charging Committee. The current practice of police departments conducting their own investigation into residents' complaints is inadequate. While some departments make an effort to appear impartial by asking another police department to conduct the investigation, the fact that police are investigating police can lead the public to wonder about the thoroughness and fairness of the investigation. In some jurisdictions, 95% of complaints have been deemed "not substantiated." We need more robust public oversight.

I appreciate that police officers have a difficult job and are often operating in dangerous situations. They deserve adequate compensation, support and respect. AND the the public deserves to have confidence that efforts are being made to protect our rights and safety. Police Accountability Boards should be empowered to conduct their own investigations when the PAB feels independent scrutiny is warranted.

I urge a favorable report on SB 285

Sincerely,

Carol Antoniewicz
8207 Gambrill Park Road
Frederick, MD 21702