



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 285
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, February 14, 2023

My name is Dayo Akinsheye. I am a resident of Silver Spring, in District 20. I am testifying on behalf of the Silver Spring Justice Coalition in support of SB 285.

The Silver Spring Justice Coalition (SSJC) 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, it is essential that we give local governing bodies, including the City of Baltimore, the authority to give their Police Accountability Boards the power to issue subpoenas and conduct independent investigations into complaints of police misconduct.

SSJC was the lead community advocacy organization that worked with our County Council to pass the legislation that created our PAB and ACC. One of our demands, supported by many in our community, was that our PAB must be able to investigate individual instances of police misconduct in order to effectively do its job as the civilian oversight body for policing in our County. However, we repeatedly heard from council members that they were unwilling to consider this request because the Maryland Police Accountability Act did not expressly give the PABs that authority.

This bill clarifies this important issue, removing any doubt that local governing bodies may, if they choose to, give their PABs independent investigatory and subpoena powers. It is enabling legislation and nothing more.

While some may argue that giving the PAB independent investigative powers is redundant and unnecessary, our community disagrees. We don't think the ACC should have to rely on the law enforcement agency's investigation, even with the ACC's ability to request additional information. Most fundamentally, we believe that conducting an independent investigation is a critical tool to assess the quality of the law enforcement agency's investigation – it is necessary to end the practice of police policing themselves and to improve policing overall.

All this bill would do is make clear that if our Council (or any other jurisdiction) agrees, there is no barrier to moving forward to meet the needs of their constituents on this important issue of community safety and accountability.

For these reasons I respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report.