

SB0571-Public Safety - Police Accountability - Time Limit for Filing Administrative Charges

Stance: Unfavorable

Testimony: My name is Adiena Britt and I reside in the 45th Legislative District. I am writing testimony against this time limitation for Administrative Charges against police officers accused of misconduct. There are several reasons I am against this time limitation, one of which being that in all jurisdictions the Internal Affairs Bureaus (or whatever they like to call themselves these days) are notoriously biased. In cases where some form of punishment or reprimand is warranted, they lean towards calling accusations “unsubstantiated” or “unsustained”. This has been well documented within the Baltimore Police Department, and I am positive is rampant within other jurisdictions. This leaves citizens and victims of police brutality with no other recourse.

I know this from experience, having had my own incident of police brutality and civil rights violations back in 2015 with the BPD. I attempted every form of recourse including alerting public officials who represented me, filing a complaint at IAD, contacting the State’s Attorney, and so on. What all of these entities do is just run the clock out on you. They have these time limitations placed on obtaining actual accountability, and they stall in their investigations until the clock literally runs out on you. This is why I feel there are so many Civil Lawsuits filed against local municipalities and police agencies. When you handcuff a victim with time limitations, they have no other recourse. Let me be clear, receiving a monetary settlement is NOT Accountability. Yet it’s the only avenue citizens are left with.

Now let’s explore intimidation of victims, because that actually occurs. Out of the hundreds of complaints filed per year, there are possibly thousands more that don’t get filed because of intimidation. Therefore, this bill would make it impossible for someone to have time to decide if they wish to look that intimidation in the eye, then be brave and file a complaint for anything to actually be done about what happened to them. A year is a short amount of time when you are traumatized. This bill does nothing but protect rogue officers who are tainting the various police forces with their behavior. Protection of “bad apples” needs to be removed, not strengthened. This isn’t a “Police Accountability” Bill, this is a “Bad Police Protection” Bill.

Having been through the process of filing complaints within the “legal” timeframe, and running into obstacle after obstacle, and witnessing the hindrances placed on victims; I am against this measure. There are cases where it comes out that particular officers are “known” repeat violent offenders within the community they are supposed to be serving and protecting. This makes people aware, well after the fact, that they have probable cause to file a complaint. This Bill would nullify that opportunity. The federal case against the GTTF did not prune ALL of the bad apples off the force, nor did it address these types of officers in other jurisdictions. Let’s stop protecting these repeat violent offender officers. There should be no time constraints placed on either filing a grievance, having it investigated, and then having the proper Administrative charges brought against any officer engaged in misconduct. This isn’t a case of “if we ignore it, perhaps it will go away.” These officers often escalate in their behavior, and not in a good way.

Let’s stop protecting the “bad apples” and allow for there to be complaints, proper investigations, and thorough administrative charges/hearings to be had with no time constraints. There’s no statute of limitations against ordinary citizens when investigating a crime; why should there be one in place because a crime was committed by a police officer?