

**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Tuesday, February 14th, 2023**

**SB 285 - County Police Accountability Boards – Investigation of Complaints of Police**

**Misconduct**

**FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee,

My name is Sarah K. Harper. I am a Maryland resident writing in support of SB 285. The provisions outlined in SB 285 play an essential role in our pursuit of meaningful, independent police accountability boards at the county level. I am grateful for your leadership and the Committee's initial support of police accountability measures and the Maryland Police Accountability Act throughout the 2021 session. However, implementation of HB 670 throughout the past year has made it clear that legislation is needed to clarify the authority local governing bodies have to empower their PAB's. In order for local PABs to follow through on the fundamental goals of the MPAA, the legislature must clarify that local bodies can give their PABs the power to conduct independent investigations into misconduct complaints.

The main function of Police Accountability Boards is to assess the quality of police discipline and issue reports and recommendations to improve police accountability. Without the ability to conduct their own separate and concurrent investigations into complaints, the boards lack meaningful capacity to do so and must accept law enforcement investigations at face value. Fundamentally, without investigatory and subpoena powers, PABs are largely hamstrung in their ability to fulfill their role.

I have lived in Prince George's County for forty years. I have read about horrific police brutality cases. I have protested these actions with the International Committee Against Racism, the Prince George's County Coalition for Police Accountability and Community Justice. I have seen how the Hyattsville Police Department ignored residents' requests for a public hearing to inform us of the resolution of the murder of Mr. Leonard Shand. In addition the Hyattsville Police Department lied about how Mr. Edwin Morales died. It was brought to light by an intrepid reporter with WJLA TV.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 285.

Appreciatively,  
Sarah K. Harper,  
4103 Gallatin St  
Hyattsville, MD 20781  
February 13, 2023