



# PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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## Testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 285

### County Police Accountability Boards – Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct

**TO:** Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee

**FROM:** Mary Astudillo, Member of Progressive Maryland

**DATE:** February 13, 2023

**POSITION:** Favorable

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 285. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots nonprofit organization with regional chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our **strong support for SB 285**.

I am a Maryland resident and an impacted family of poor policing practices and inequalities in the criminal justice system that has irreparably harmed the lives of my family members forever. It collapsed the career and future opportunity of a hard working, dedicated DPT student completing his doctorate degree at UMES. A person who would have served and healed our community and been a significant contributor to our tax base.. I am 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. Without investigatory and subpoena powers, PABs cannot fulfill their role.

For these reasons, **we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 285**.

Mary Astudillo