

February 14, 2023

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TESTIMONY ON SB0285 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
**County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police
Misconduct**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Mara Greengrass

My name is Mara Greengrass. I'm a resident of District 18 and I'm submitting this testimony in support of SB0285, County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct.

Jewish tradition teaches that all of us are *b'tzelem elohim*, that is, "made in the image of God." Unequal treatment of people due to superficial features such as skin color, country of origin, or socioeconomic status is a disgrace.

At the same time, my background in the discipline of applied anthropology tells me the social science research is clear: Black and brown people are harassed, arrested, and killed by police officers at very unequal rates. If this could be stopped by police departments investigating themselves, the problem would already be solved.

I was grateful in 2021 when the General Assembly wisely voted to mandate the formation of Police Advisory Boards (PABs) in Maryland jurisdictions. However, under this preliminary legislation, there is no requirement to give these boards the independent oversight power needed to truly investigate and halt police misconduct. While there are state agencies that can do this work, PABs are members of the community in question and can do it better.

We cannot assume that everyone in the state shares a desire for true and honest investigation into incidents that may involve racist, classist, or sexist behavior on the part of law enforcement. A toothless advisory board is only barely better than no board at all.

Please give PABs subpoena powers and allow them to hire independent investigators. Make Maryland safer for all its citizens, not just people like me.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0285.