

3010 BLUERIDGE AVE
SILVER SPRING, MD 20902

703.609.1092
EZRA.TOWNE@GMAIL.COM

Monday, February 13, 2023

**Written Testimony Favorable to SB0285: County Police Accountability Boards –
Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct**

Delegate Smith, Chair, Delegate Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair, and esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Ezra Towne, and my pronouns are they/them. It is my firm belief that without independent investigatory powers, police accountability boards are stripped of their purpose and effectiveness from the get go. **I fully support SB0285 - and I ask for a favorable report without amendments.**

I am a 10+ year resident of District 18, and live in the Wheaton Hills residential area between state highways 185 (Connecticut Ave), 586 (Veirs Mill Rd), 97 (Georgia Ave), and 193 (University Ave). My realization of the critical need for independent investigatory powers of police misconduct was born out of concern for multiple, ceaseless, pedestrian and bicyclist deaths in my neighborhood.

Through other advocacy work in the county, I have developed a relationship with the Montgomery County Police Department of, mostly, mutual respect. I placed a call a few years ago to then District 4 Commander Marc Yamada about a racist statement made in the press by an officer regarding individuals who are most likely to be casualties of irresponsible, reckless driving along major roads surrounding my immediate neighborhood. While Commander Yamada returned my call promptly, I learned only that the officer had made a poor choice, had been spoken to, and that any discipline, or lack thereof, was a private human resources issue. An email exchange between myself and then Chief Thomas Manger repeated the same.

If any other county employee had publicly revealed such racism, they would have been disciplined in some way. Commander Marc Yamada and Chief Thomas Manger made no statements to me about the discipline, or lack there of, of this police officer. I was outraged.

But this problem is small compared to police endorsed murder and continued protection of police officers from investigation of extreme misconduct and abuse of power.

EZRA MACLEOD TOWNE

3010 BLUERIDGE AVE
SILVER SPRING, MD 20902

703.609.1092
EZRA.TOWNE@GMAIL.COM

American culture often portrays police officers as upstanding citizens and responsible, caring role models for the public. We know now that this is not the case - given official and unofficial reports of disproportionate excessive violence towards and murder of black and brown men by the police.¹ Since George Floyd's death in 2020, there have been nearly 100 killings by police officers per month.² According to Mapping Police Violence, Inc., in 2022, American police killed 1,192 people - the deadliest year in a decade.³ We know now, without doubt, that policing - how police are trained, rewarded, and disciplined - is the problem. This is proven by the fact that 98.1% of killings by police from 2013-2022 have not resulted in officers being charged with a crime.⁴

The culture of policing - of officers covering for one another, and of supervisors being unwilling to enforce real, tangible, consequences for police misconduct - is exactly why police activity boards MUST have independent investigatory powers. Without those, police advisory boards are mere lip service towards valid concerns.

I believe that the people of Maryland, the free state, want to do better than lip service - **I ask the Judicial Proceedings Committee to submit a favorable report on SB0285** - which grants police accountability boards the powers that are needed to do their indispensable work, and clarify the investigatory powers for each local police accountability board statewide.

Sincerely,
Mx. Ezra Towne
District 18, Wheaton

¹ The Culture and Practices of Policing That Killed Tyre Nichols (and So Many Others), February 9, 2023, Lawfare, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/culture-and-practices-policing-killed-tyre-nichols-and-so-many-others>

² 'It never stops': killings by US police reach record high in 2022, January 6, 2023, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/06/us-police-killings-record-number-2022>

³ Mapping Police Violence, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.us/>

⁴ Mapping Police Violence, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.us/>