

March 1, 2023

**House Bill 771**

**Human Relations - Patterns and Practices of Civil Rights Violations -  
Remedies**

**Judiciary Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 771 – Human Relations - Patterns and Practices of Civil Rights Violations - Remedies. This Bill would authorize the Attorney General to investigate and initiate civil actions to remedy unlawful patterns or practices committed by government officials, grant the Attorney General subpoena power to support investigations, and empower the Attorney General to obtain equitable and declaratory relief to eliminate the pattern or practice of certain conduct.

Pattern and practice investigations, focused on widespread or systemic misconduct that deprive people of their rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States, are an important component in instituting systemic change in law enforcement. Studies have shown that pattern and practice investigations and resulting recommendations or consent decrees have been effective in reducing violent crime,<sup>1</sup> serious use-of-force incidents,<sup>2</sup> and police officer fatalities.<sup>3</sup> Several states have statutorily empowered their attorneys general to conduct their own pattern and practice investigations, including California in 2000 and more recently Colorado, Virginia, and Nevada. By focusing not on individuals but rather institutions, including management, supervision, and training, pattern and practice investigations facilitate the development of sound policies and procedures to ensure accountability and transparency while keeping our residents and police officers safe.

For all of these reasons, Anne Arundel County respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 771.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for American Progress, *Violent Crime Rates Declined in 10 Jurisdictions Following Comprehensive Police Reform*, (Feb. 27, 2023).

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/violent-crime-rates-declined-10-jurisdictions-following-comprehensive-police-reform/>

<sup>2</sup> Office of the Mayor of Seattle, *City of Seattle Releases New Reports Showing That Seattle Police Department Sustained A Dramatic Reduction in Serious Use of Force and Continues Significant Reforms Under Federal Consent Decree*, (Feb. 27, 2023).

<https://durkan.seattle.gov/2019/11/city-of-seattle-releases-new-reports-showing-that-seattle-police-department-sustained-a-dramatic-reduction-in-serious-use-of-force-and-continues-significant-reforms-under-federal-consent-decree/>

<sup>3</sup> Li Sian Goh, PhD, *Going Local: Do Consent Decrees and Other Forms of Federal Intervention in Municipal Police Departments Reduce Police Killings?* Justice Quarterly. Volume 37, 2020 - Issue 5 (2020).