

NICOLE A. WILLIAMS, ESQ.
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Judiciary Committee

Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee

Vice Chair, Prince George's
County House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 28, 2023

The Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger

Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee

6 Bladen Street, Room 101

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 0748

Good Afternoon, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams and I am testifying in favor of House Bill 748, also known as the Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition of Sexual Activity. This bill alters the penalties relating to sexual contact with a person who is under arrest, in detention, or otherwise in the actual custody of a law enforcement officer under certain circumstances. In other words, this piece of legislation ensures that law enforcement officers will be held accountable for any sexual misconduct in a role that's sole purpose is to protect and serve our communities.

I first introduced this bill in 2021 and I am reintroducing it this session because I feel it is important to ensure that we protect our communities, especially vulnerable populations. At that time, in 2021, I spoke about an incident that occurred in 2018. A six-year veteran officer of the Prince George's County Police forced an undocumented Latina woman into engaging in a sexual act in exchange for evading a ticket or arrest. Since that time, in 2020, a Fairmont Heights Officer sexually assaulted a 19-year-old woman while in custody after a traffic stop. In October of 2022, a Maryland Sheriff was charged with second-degree rape and assault of an individual while in custody, but there are still countless others that have gone unchecked. Since the introduction of this bill, I have been working hard to make sure that these unfortunate situations do not continue.

In Maryland, we hold our law enforcement officers to a high standard and there *are* honorable officers in Prince George's County and all across the state of Maryland. However, the

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officers who perform these heinous offenses are not isolated and this type of behavior must not be tolerated. When a police officer abuses their power, it reduces the public's trust in good police officers and completely deteriorates the public's confidence in our policing system. In this current political climate, we cannot stand by and allow the trust in our police force to weaken any further.

We want all of our residents to know that our police officers are operating at their highest level of integrity to protect our citizens. Enacting this bill will continue the fight that restores the public's faith in our law enforcement agencies. It is for these reasons that I urge a favorable report on House Bill 748.

Sincerely,

Nicole A. Williams, Esq.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq