

February 24, 2023

House Judiciary Committee
Del. Luke Clippinger, Chair
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Clippinger and Committee Members:

We are submitting this letter as written testimony **in strong support of HB0585**, on Use of Force Incident Reports, introduced by Delegate Williams and others, in advance of your hearing on February 28.

As members of the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church and in response to our understanding of the gospel, we are active in anti-racism work including efforts to redefine public safety and transform policing. Presbyterians for Police Transformation is the body within our congregation charged with leading this aspect of our ministry. We realize that the movement for racial justice, including the much-needed transformation of policing in this country, requires a comprehensive approach. After much research, discussion, and reflection, we have chosen 7 priorities for our advocacy work in the area of police reform in Maryland. One of these priorities is the establishment of effective accountability policies and mechanisms for police officers and institutions. To that end, we are writing **in support of proposed bill HB0585**, “Public Safety – Use of Force Incident Reports”.

This bill would provide to the public essential information about incidents in which police officers use force in the line of duty. Information about such incidents would be made public in a more timely manner and more frequently. Also, the required demographic information about the targets of police force is expanded by this legislation to include disability, which speaks to the increasing concern over the criminalization of cognitive and mental disorders. Publication of this data would go a long way towards the type of transparency that is needed for effective police reform and civilian oversight. It would also help incentivize police institutions to take concrete and effective steps to reduce the unnecessary use of force. All of this helps to dismantle the systemic racism in current policing practice that results in disproportionate harm to people of color.

The Maryland legislature has, in recent years, taken admirable steps towards needed police transformation. Transparency is a crucial piece in this effort to create policing institutions that serve all citizens. Even more importantly, this level of transparency will lead to a reduction in violence against people of color at the hands of police officers.

We strongly encourage the legislature to pass HB0585.

Sincerely,

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