

## **Testimony to the Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**SB621** County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct

**Position:** Support

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs and the Maryland Coalition for Police Justice and Accountability. I am a resident of district **43A**. I also serve as a member of Baltimore City's **Administrative Charging Committee (ACC)** which informs my comments below. **I am testifying in support of SB621.**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

As an ACC member reviewing over 600 cases of alleged misconduct by members of Baltimore City's police department and sheriff's office since June, 2023, I am a direct witness to the internal investigatory work of both police forces. The BPD has greatly improved its office that handles investigations since the beginning of our city's Consent Decree, but we know changes in leadership often lead to changes in priorities. Baltimore City experienced many turnovers of Police Commissioner leadership prior to Commissioner Harrison who brought stability and progress on many crucial fronts; but he has now been replaced and we can already see how leaders in crucial positions are already affected, especially in the area of police accountability. My hope is that progress in the internal investigatory work will continue to be a priority and will continue to improve, but what happens if it doesn't? It is crucial for the Police Accountability Board with its adjudication arm, the Administration Charging Committee, to have its own investigatory powers either to supplement the police department's internal investigations; or, if those efforts falter, to replace them. Having investigatory power – whether in reserve or in use – can serve as a back up or as a warning if the quality of investigations are not sufficient to allow the ACC to make complete, fair and impartial adjudications. This will allow the PAB/ACC to continue to have the power to hold our police departments accountable as intended by the General Assembly which overwhelmingly passed HB640 In 2021. HB640 created a new system of reporting, adjudicating, and imposing discipline in police misconduct complaints. One major question left open by HB640 is whether a county may empower a PAB to conduct its own investigations of police misconduct. SB621 would amend the law to clarify that counties may invest the PAB with investigatory powers.

It is for these reasons that I am asking you to vote **in support of SB621.**

Sincerely,

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