

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I am a resident of District #31, and I am writing to urge you to **support SB 621**.

The provisions outlined in SB 621 play an essential role in our pursuit of meaningful, independent police accountability boards (PABs) at the county level. I am grateful for your leadership and the Committee's initial support of police accountability measures and the Maryland Police Accountability Act (MPAA) throughout the 2021 session.

However, implementation of HB0670 throughout the past two years has made it evident that legislation is needed to clarify the authority local governing bodies have to empower their PABs. In order for local PABs to follow through on the fundamental goals of the MPAA, the legislature must clarify that local bodies can give their PABs the power to conduct **independent investigations** into misconduct complaints.

The main function of Police Accountability Boards is to assess the quality of police discipline and issue reports and recommendations to improve police accountability. Without the ability to conduct their own separate and concurrent investigations into complaints, the boards lack meaningful capacity to do so and must accept law enforcement investigations at face value. Fundamentally, *without investigatory and subpoena powers, PABs are largely hamstrung in their ability to fulfill their role.*

Until all Police Accountability Boards are able to get independent investigative authority, their effectiveness will be severely limited. And **effective PABs are essential to gaining public trust in our police**. It is for this reason that I am encouraging you to vote in support of SB 621.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Benzer
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Gambrills, MD