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Dear Chairman Smith, Vice-chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Governor Wes Moore, I urge a favorable report of HB597/SB470, Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act. Ensuring the safety of our communities heavily relies on a robust public safety workforce. However, the increasing number of unfilled positions in these crucial roles across the state is concerning. Without immediate action, we could face thousands of vacancies in law enforcement and other related public safety positions in the coming years.

The Growing Apprenticeships and Public Safety Workforce Act (GAPS Act) is intended to address workforce shortages for law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and related professions. The GAPS Act has three sections that proposes both short and long term actions to help address the workforce shortage problem. The first portion reforms the Law Enforcement Cadet Registered Apprenticeship Program by broadening the scope to focus on incentivizing registered Apprenticeship creation, rather than just the “cadet law enforcement” occupation. The second section creates a workgroup on growing engagement in the law enforcement workforce. The final section directs the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy for law enforcement officer wellness programs that can be adopted across the state.

Maryland needs to train and support highly-qualified public safety and law enforcement professionals to protect our communities. As we contend with workforce shortages across our public safety agencies, the GAPS Act will help us get more boots on the ground, and help us keep the boots we already have. Public safety is our administration’s top priority, and Governor Moore is working to ensure that our communities are safer by directly providing support that will help Maryland expand its law enforcement community.

Sincerely,
Myles Hicks, Deputy Legislative Officer
Office of Governor Wes Moore