



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Unit
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POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: March 28, 2024

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 607 **POSITION:** Support

BILL TITLE: Public Safety – Police Accountability and Discipline – Summary Punishment

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

This legislation authorizes a law enforcement agency to impose summary punishment on a police officer without processing the disciplinary case through the Administrative Charging Committee. The summary punishment may only be for a minor offense, may not exceed a written reprimand in accordance with the statewide disciplinary Matrix, and the facts of the case are not in dispute. The police officer may not appeal the punishment.

Under current law, every disciplinary complaint involving a member of the public is required to be investigated and forwarded to the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC) and the Police Accountability Board. Regardless if it's a minor infraction or major investigation, every investigation has to be reviewed by the board(s) before disciplinary action is taken.

In 2023, the Department of State Police (DSP) sent 295 cases to the statewide Administrative Charging Committee. Of those, 96 investigations were sustained for discipline. More than half of those cases, 55, were deemed either formal counseling or a written reprimand (Minor Offenses). These minor cases take up a great deal of the investigator's time as well as the time of the ACC board members.

The state ACC is made up of volunteers. The majority of cases are considered minor based on the disciplinary Matrix. A majority of the ACC's cases include accident reports involving troopers, courtesy complaints, chain of command complaints, etc. The DSP does not minimize the role of the ACC, but it would benefit all concerned if these minor cases could be handled expeditiously and allow the ACC to focus on the more serious cases.

The process authorized in Senate Bill 607 does not impede or in anyway impact the ability of the public, victim, or complainant to have access to the investigation or the imposed discipline. It does, however, provide a swift result for minor disciplinary cases. This benefits the complainant, the police officer, and the volunteers who give their time as members of the ACC. Transparency of the complaint process remains open and fair.

For these reasons, the Department of State Police urges the committee to give Senate Bill 607 a favorable report.