



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger Chair and
Members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Natasha Mehu, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 6, 2024

RE: **HB 597 Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT HB 597**. This bill transforms the Law Enforcement Cadet Apprenticeship Program into the Public Safety Apprenticeship Program.

In recent years, law enforcement agencies across the state have struggled to recruit and retain officers. This growing problem stymies public safety efforts, forces agencies to do much more with much less manpower, leaves communities vulnerable, and leads officers on the force to burn out. This issue is not limited to law enforcement. Public safety agencies are using all the tools in their toolbox to incentivize people to join the force. Existing tools such as the Law Enforcement Cadet Apprenticeship Program help but need to be improved to address the challenges and needs of the times.

The overall goal of HB 597 is to make sure that the state has a robust, highly trained, and qualified public safety workforce. It reforms the existing apprenticeship program by broadening the definition of included public safety agencies, expanding the ability for agencies to qualify for grants under the program, and increasing the amount of money an agency may receive for eligible apprentices that participate in the program. To improve officer retention, additional provisions require the establishment of a model mental health wellness policy for law enforcement agencies to ensure that officers are supported through their often difficult work. The work only begins with this bill as it also creates a Workgroup on Growing Engagement in the Law Enforcement Workforce that is charged with studying the shortage of employees, determining ways to advertise and promote law enforcement jobs, and making recommendations on incentives.

HB 597 provides public safety agencies with resources and support to bolster recruitment and retention. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT HB 597**.