



House Bill 885

Support for House Bill 885—Public Safety—Police Accountability—Investigation Records Related to Unfounded and Exonerated Complaints

Position: **FAV**

Date: **February 25, 2025**

To: **Judiciary**

On behalf of the Caroline County Commissioners, we wish to express our **strong support** for **House Bill 885—Public Safety—Police Accountability—Investigation Records Related to Unfounded and Exonerated** which ensures that police officers are not unfairly burdened by false or unproven accusations throughout their careers. In small, close-knit communities like Caroline County, law enforcement officers face significant challenges in earning and maintaining public trust, and a baseless complaint should not be allowed to cast a shadow over an officer's reputation indefinitely.

We fully support accountability and transparency in policing, but we also recognize that officers often find themselves in difficult situations where complaints can arise—even when they have acted lawfully and in line with department policy. When an officer is found to be exonerated or a complaint is deemed unfounded, it is only fair that those records be removed from their personnel file after a reasonable period. Without this protection, officers in communities like ours could find their careers permanently impacted by allegations that had no merit.

It is already challenging to recruit and retain dedicated law enforcement officers in rural areas like Caroline County. The prospect of a false or unsubstantiated complaint lingering in an officer's record only makes the profession less attractive, discouraging good officers from staying in the field. By passing HB 885, Maryland will take a balanced approach—one that ensures misconduct is properly recorded but also recognizes that officers should not be haunted by accusations that were disproven.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge you to support House Bill 885 to help ensure fairness for those who serve and protect our communities.

Sincerely,

J. Travis Breeding, President