



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

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

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

DATE: February 25, 2025

RE: **HB 139 - Police Accountability - Deadline for Completion of Investigation**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE HB 139**. This bill requires that the investigating unit of a law enforcement agency complete its review of complaints and forward its investigatory files to the Administrative Charging Committee ("ACC") within nine months after the filing of the complaint.

The proposed bill imposes strict and arbitrary deadlines on the investigative process, creating a higher risk of errors, overlooked evidence, and incomplete investigations—especially in complex criminal cases. By mandating that investigatory files be forwarded to the ACC within nine months, the bill prioritizes speed over thoroughness. Investigations into police misconduct, particularly those involving serious allegations, require time to properly gather evidence, interview witnesses, and analyze all relevant facts. Rushing this process could lead to wrongful conclusions, whether in favor of the accused officer or the complainant, ultimately undermining public trust in the system.

The MCPA-MSA understands that the intent of this bill is to work through cases faster and bring justice and peace to victims in a time efficient manner. However, imposing an arbitrary timeline is not the right solution. Some cases are inherently more complicated, requiring forensic analysis, expert testimony, or cooperation with multiple agencies. By enforcing rigid deadlines, this bill could unintentionally prevent investigators from utilizing critical evidence that may emerge later in the process. Furthermore, a one-year timeline applies a one-size-fits-all approach to investigations that vary greatly in complexity, facts, and discovery of evidence. We urge this committee to recognize that justice is not served by enforcing random deadlines, but by a commitment to uncovering the truth, which sometimes takes longer than the parties involved would like. However, prioritizing a one-year timeline over a thorough investigation is the wrong thing to do. The current framework allows for investigations to be conducted thoroughly and without undue pressure, ensuring that disciplinary actions are based on comprehensive and well-substantiated findings. Changing this system risks diminishing the quality of police accountability and could lead to both unjust discipline and wrongful exoneration. The legislature should reject this bill and uphold the integrity of the investigative process. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE HB 139** and urge an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report.