

Friday, February 21, 2025



## Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with the Campaign for Justice, Safety, and Jobs (CJSJ), which is composed of over 30 organizations from Baltimore to address and provide policy, economic and justice solutions. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying in **support of HB0186 - Trial Board Composition.**

Under 2021's landmark reform of police discipline, officers who refuse discipline after a finding by the Administrative Charging Committee that they committed misconduct are entitled to a hearing before a trial board. This trial board is made up of one police officer of the accused officer's rank, one civilian appointed by the Police Accountability Board, and one active or retired administrative law judge. While the decision to make one of the civilian appointees an administrative law judge was a considered one, it has unfortunately made it difficult for some counties to find sufficient candidates to staff their trial boards. This inhibits the ability of the trial boards to hold hearings in a timely manner.

HB0186 would seek to repair this problem by opening the administrative law judge slot to attorneys who are qualified to be administrative law judges, even if they have not served as such. In other words, to be eligible to serve on a trial board, attorneys would have to be US citizens and Maryland residents for at least 5 years, living in the county whose PAB is overseeing the trial board, registered to vote, at least 30 years of age, and admitted to practice law in Maryland.

Even without experience as an administrative law judge, an attorney who meets these qualifications will have the knowledge necessary to act as chair, rule on motions, and author the written decision of the board. These attorneys would, like any other person

appointed to the trial board, undergo the training set forth by the Maryland Police Standards and Training Commission. By opening this position to more candidates, HB0186 would allow trial boards to be appropriately staffed and ensure that accused police officers - and the public - see a resolution to misconduct complaints in a timely manner.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0186 - Trial Board Composition.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Katherine Blaha  
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