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SB 0121 – Personal Information - Public Servant Protections

Dear Chairman Feldman and Distinguished Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

The Maryland State Fraternal Order of Police **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 0121 - **Personal Information - Public Servant Protections**.

In society today it has become far too easy for members of the public to obtain the personal information of public servants, to include police officers, on searches of social networks and the web. Many of these instances occur when others go out of their way to put this information out for use by those who have ill intentions. Currently the information also gets out via other, and even legitimate or accidental means. The information, however, is currently not protected and as removeable as it will be with the enactment of **Senate Bill 0121**.

We have seen across the country and in Maryland many examples of harassment, intrusions on privacy, trespassing at private residences, destruction of property and harm, to include serious assault and homicide, that have come to police officers and elected officials. **Senate Bill 0121** will allow for the safeguarding of this information and will make it harder for individuals to come by this information. However, and more importantly, it will give remedy, and for more serious incidents, criminal culpability, when individuals or entities put out this information for others to act with malice and hate.

Senate Bill 0121, modeled after the Judge Wilkinson Act as well as those of other States, is a much-needed step towards safeguarding the privacy and safety of public servants in Maryland. If enacted, this bill will allow for several safeguards for “Protected Individuals”. There are many parts to this bill, but I want to point out the ones that the Fraternal Order of Police finds to be the most important towards the protection of our members and our families.

First, **Senate Bill 0121** will allow “Protected Individuals”, or the Agency, entity or Office that they work or worked for, the ability to request that a Governmental Entity not publish their personal information on the internet, social media, or social networks. Requests can also be made that personal information be removed from any existing publication. The “protected individuals” are various public servants that are defined in the bill and include active and retired law enforcement officers as well as any spouse, child, or dependent that resides in the same household as the “protected individual”.

Second, **Senate Bill 0121** will allow for the requests to be made to a person that has published personal information of a protected individual. The bill sets guidelines for how these requests must be made and the actions that must be taken by the governmental entity or person that was sent the request as well as the actions that can be taken if a request is not honored.

Third, **Senate Bill 0121** details the actions that can be taken if a request is not honored and takes the important step of making it a criminal misdemeanor for any individual to publish the personal information of a protected individual if it can be shown that they knowingly did so and that they knew or reasonably knew that posting the information posed an imminent and serious threat to the protected individual and the publishing of the information resulted in an assault of any degree, a harassment, a trespass, or a malicious destruction of property.

On behalf of the more than 20,000 Courageous Men and Women of the Maryland Fraternal Order of Police we thank you for your support and ask for your **FAVORABLE** vote on **Senate Bill 0121 - Personal Information - Public Servant Protections**.



Angelo L. Consoli Jr,
2nd Vice President, FOP, Maryland State Lodge
Immediate Past President, FOP Lodge 89, Prince George's County