

Testimony in Favor with Amendments House Bill 332 - Civil Actions - Violation of Constitutional Rights (No Kings Act)

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross, Councilwoman at Large for the City of Glenarden, a United States Air Force veteran, and a public servant who has spent decades working at the intersection of government accountability, community trust, and constitutional responsibility. I respectfully submit testimony in Favor with Amendments for House Bill 332.

Throughout my military and municipal service, I have taken an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. That oath does not end when service members transition into civilian leadership. It continues in local government, where residents expect both protection of their rights and responsible governance carried out under the rule of law.

House Bill 332 recognizes an important principle. No individual acting under color of law should be beyond accountability when constitutional rights are violated. Communities across Maryland must have confidence that their rights are meaningful and enforceable. A clear civil pathway for redress strengthens public trust and reinforces the legitimacy of government institutions.

At the same time, effective governance requires balance. Local officials, law enforcement officers, and public servants operate daily in complex and rapidly evolving environments. Policies that encourage accountability must also preserve the ability of officials to act decisively in good faith without fear of excessive or duplicative litigation.

For these reasons, I support this legislation with the following amendments:

First, clarify statutory language to ensure alignment with existing federal civil rights standards under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983 so that Maryland does not create conflicting liability frameworks that produce uncertainty for courts or municipalities.

Second, include explicit language affirming that municipalities are not subject to expanded liability beyond current law unless deliberate policy level violations are demonstrated. This protects taxpayers from unintended financial exposure while preserving remedies for genuine constitutional harm.

Third, require reasonable notice provisions prior to filing certain claims against local entities, allowing opportunities for early resolution, corrective action, and mediation where appropriate.

Fourth, provide training guidance or implementation support to assist local governments in updating policies, ensuring prevention rather than punishment remains the primary objective.

These amendments do not weaken accountability. They strengthen the bill by ensuring fairness, clarity, and long term sustainability. As someone who has trained thousands of leaders and served in environments where decisions must be made under pressure, I believe strongly that accountability and operational effectiveness must coexist.

Maryland has an opportunity to reinforce constitutional protections while maintaining the stability of local governance. With thoughtful amendments, House Bill 332 can achieve both goals and serve as a model for balanced civil rights enforcement.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a Favorable Report with Amendments on House Bill 332.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross Councilwoman at Large, City of Glenarden United States Air Force Veteran Municipal Advocate 571 719 8784