

HB0471_RichardKaplowitz_UNF

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Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#0471- POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

Public Safety - State and Local Governments - Use of Unmanned Aircraft

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony opposing HB#0471, Public Safety - State and Local Governments - Use of Unmanned Aircraft

I live in Frederick County and am constantly in the city of Frederick. The Frederick Police Department (FPD) uses a fleet of DJI drones, operated by trained, certified pilots for tasks including crash reconstruction, crime scene mapping, photography, and searching for missing persons or suspects. The program, active since 2016, aims to improve situational awareness and safety, with plans to expand into a "Drone as First Responder" (DFR) model to provide immediate aerial support. ¹

Key Aspects of the Drone Program:

- **Capabilities & Equipment:** The department utilizes DJI drones, with some models equipped with advanced imaging for thermal detection and high-resolution, real-time video streaming, which is often managed through platforms like DroneSense and Pix4D.
- **Operational Usage:** Drones are used for critical incident response, such as barricade situations, and for monitoring large public events, notes [GovTech](#).
- **Training & Certification:** FPD operators are FAA-certified (Part 107) and often receive specialized training for law enforcement applications.
- **Privacy & Policy:** Drone operations must adhere to established, formal policies that govern when and how they are deployed, ensuring compliance with privacy standards

The program is aimed at maximizing efficiency and safety for both officers and the public during high-risk scenarios, according to the [Frederick News-Post](#) and GovTech.

This bill would provide that certain evidence obtained through the use of an unmanned aircraft is inadmissible in a criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding; prohibiting a unit of State government or a political subdivision of the State from deploying or operating an unmanned aircraft subject to certain exceptions; and prohibiting a unit of State government or a political subdivision of the State from using certain information acquired through the use of an unmanned aircraft.

In some cases, the evidence provided by the drone records, subject to privacy protections, can and will show commission of a crime. Removal of this tool from the prosecution may permit criminal activity to go unpunished if no witnesses were present at the time other than the drone cameras recording.

I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB#0471.

¹ Google AI Search "frederick police department use of drones"