

Testimony on House Bill 31 – Opposed

**Presbyterians for Police Transformation
Takoma Park Presbyterian Church**

Regarding HB 31 – Police Discipline – Order to Show Cause

Submitted to the Maryland House Judiciary Committee

February 24, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. As members of the Takoma Park Presbyterian Church organized as Presbyterians for Police Transformation, we want to indicate our strong opposition to House Bill 31, legislation granting exceptional authority to law enforcement officers under investigation for misconduct.

This bill seeks to allow police officers under investigation for misconduct to stall proceedings by filing "violation of rights" claims in state circuit court. Doing so would revive a harmful and unnecessary provision of the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights (LEOBR), which was repealed under the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021. In that repeal action, the General Assembly affirmed that officers should be treated like all other public employees when under investigation for misconduct. No other public servant has the right to interrupt an administrative investigation with interlocutory appeals before a final judgment is reached. There is no justification for departing from the standard judicial rule that prohibits piecemeal appeals except in extraordinary circumstances. There are multiple mechanisms by which an officer can raise concerns about rights violations after the investigatory procedures are concluded, as is the case in such proceedings for any other person.

If adopted, this bill would allow officers to effectively avoid accountability altogether. By filing a "show cause" proceeding, an officer could pause an investigation long enough to exhaust the one-year statutory time limit for charges. This would make discipline impossible—even if the court ultimately finds that no rights were violated. HB 31 essentially provides a loophole for officers to evade investigation and justice if found guilty.

Like other public employees and anyone else in our court system, officers can and should raise any defense and appeal any erroneous judgments that they think have occurred. Giving them a special right to interrupt the investigation, and delay the administrative proceeding, to do so is unnecessary and unwarranted.

HB 31, if successful, would represent an important and tragic step backwards in the state's journey, which started with our landmark repeal of the LEOBR in 2021, towards more accountable, equitable, and transparent policing in Maryland. It would also make it more difficult for the many law enforcement organizations in the state who are doing the good work of making their practices more transparent and their officers more accountable. It would, in short, erase important progress that has been made.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose HB 31 and encourage our representatives to ensure that it does not pass.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Submitted by Carolyn Seaman (cseamangm@gmail.com) on behalf of Presbyterians for Police Transformation, 310 Tulip Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912