

HB 794: Public Safety - Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission - Prohibition Against Certain Affiliation or Support by Police Officers: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to respectfully **oppose HB 794**, concerning *Public Safety – Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission – Prohibition Against Certain Affiliation or Support by Police Officers*.

While safeguarding public trust in law enforcement is an important goal, **HB 794** raises significant concerns related to due process, clarity, equal protection, viewpoint neutrality, the scope of restrictions placed on individual officers, and the potential for policies that may unintentionally promote racial tension rather than reduce it.

This legislation will impose broad prohibitions based on perceived affiliations or expressions of support, which could create ambiguity in enforcement and potentially subject officers to disciplinary action without clearly defined standards or sufficient procedural safeguards.

As written, the bill's provisions risk creating standards that could be interpreted or enforced in ways that focus on race-based classifications or assumptions. Policies that single out ideologies or affiliations tied to particular racial dynamics will foster perceptions of unequal treatment among officers, including White officers, and will contribute to division within departments rather than unity and professionalism.

Additionally, the absence of clear, narrowly tailored definitions increases the likelihood of subjective interpretation in disciplinary decisions. This may expose officers to sanctions based on perceived beliefs or associations, rather than demonstrable misconduct, and raises concerns about fairness and consistency in application across Maryland's diverse jurisdictions. Policies affecting employment status and professional certification should be narrowly tailored, consistently applied, and grounded in transparent criteria that respect constitutional protections.

This bill states "...THE COMMISSION SHALL PROHIBIT POLICE OFFICERS FROM: AFFILIATING WITH, SUPPORTING, OR ADVOCATING FOR WHITE SUPREMACIST GROUPS, CAUSES, OR IDEOLOGIES..."

"...“WHITE SUPREMACIST GROUPS, CAUSES, OR IDEOLOGIES” MEANS GROUPS, CAUSES, OR IDEOLOGIES THAT: 1. PROMOTE WHITE SUPREMACY AND THE IDEA THAT WHITE PEOPLE ARE SUPERIOR TO BIPOC; 2. PROMOTE RELIGIOUS AND RACIAL BIGOTRY; 3. SEEK TO EXACERBATE RACIAL AND

ETHNIC TENSIONS BETWEEN BIPOC AND NON-BIPOC; OR 4. ENGAGE IN PATENTLY HATEFUL AND INFLAMMATORY SPEECH, INTIMIDATION, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST BIPOC AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING WHITE SUPREMACY..."

Importantly, the bill lacks a clear definition of "white supremacy".

Efforts to combat bias and discrimination must be undertaken in a manner that reinforces equal treatment under the law for **all** individuals. **This legislation risks being viewed as race-conscious in its scope or enforcement, will undermine morale, erode trust, and inadvertently heighten racial tensions within both law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve.**

Maryland should pursue policies that promote impartial standards, due process protections, and equal accountability—without creating frameworks that could be seen as favoring or disadvantaging individuals based on race or **perceived** identity, support or affiliations.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **oppose HB 794**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals