

## **Testimony on House Bill 699 Maryland Use of Force Statute Failure to Prevent Excessive Force or Render First Aid**

Determination: Favorable with Amendments After review of House Bill 699 and weighing it against my record of municipal leadership, public safety collaboration, veteran service, and commitment to accountable governance, the strongest and most defensible position is Favorable with Amendments.

Recommended Amendments: 1. Clarify the definition of intentional violation to ensure officers acting in rapidly evolving and dangerous circumstances are not subject to criminal liability for reasonable judgment errors. 2. Establish clear statewide training standards and funding support to ensure every department, including small municipal agencies, can meet compliance requirements. 3. Require documentation standards that distinguish between failure to act and situations where medical access or officer safety prevents immediate intervention or aid. 4. Include implementation guidance developed jointly with municipal leaders and law enforcement command staff to ensure uniform application across jurisdictions.

Chair and Members of the Committee, I submit this testimony as a municipal leader, retired United States Air Force veteran, and public servant committed to both community trust and responsible policing. Local governments depend on professional law enforcement to protect residents while maintaining legitimacy through transparency and accountability. House Bill 699 reinforces an important principle that the preservation of life must remain central to public safety operations. The requirement that officers intervene when excessive force occurs and render first aid when injury results reflects expectations already embraced by many departments through policy and training. Codifying these expectations strengthens public confidence and affirms that accountability applies at every level of authority. At the same time, effective policy must recognize operational reality. Officers often operate in dynamic environments where seconds determine outcomes. Statutory language must clearly distinguish intentional misconduct from circumstances shaped by safety risks, limited visibility, or competing threats. Without that clarity, municipalities risk recruitment challenges, inconsistent enforcement, and uncertainty for officers attempting to comply in good faith. From a local government perspective, implementation must also consider resource equity. Smaller municipal agencies require training support, standardized guidance, and realistic timelines to meet new mandates. When policy is paired with practical implementation, accountability becomes sustainable rather than punitive. With the recommended amendments, this legislation can strengthen community trust while preserving fairness and operational clarity for those sworn to protect our residents. Maryland can lead by demonstrating that accountability and effective policing are not opposing goals but mutually reinforcing responsibilities. For these reasons, I respectfully request a Favorable with Amendments report on House Bill 699.

Respectfully submitted, The Honorable Dr Cashenna A Cross Councilwoman At Large City of Glenarden