

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



Take Action to Increase Police Accountability

Next Tuesday, March 2, your Senator will debate and vote on a package of bills intended to increase police accountability in Maryland. These bills have just been approved by the Judicial Proceedings committee. Please contact your Senator TODAY to urge them to support these bills.

Some of these bills were amended in committee. It is important that this legislation is not watered down any further and that amendments from the floor are refused by the Senate.

Here is a brief listing of those eight bills:

SB0071 Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 – Body-Worn Cameras.

Cameras today can document what actually happens in the event of a confrontation between the police and a suspect. This law provides for the development of a clear policy regarding when it is mandatory for the police to activate the camera and how that evidence will be used.

SB0074 Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 – Employee Assistance Programs and Early Intervention Programs. Identifying police officers who are at risk of engaging in dangerous behavior is a critical step in protecting citizens from tragic events. Early intervention is key to helping our police deal with their own problems before those problems become catastrophic.

SB0178 Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 – Personnel Records – Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law). If a law enforcement officer, in the course of the officer's official duties, (1) engages in conduct that results in the death of or serious bodily injury to another or (2) discharges a firearm, this bill requires the law enforcement agency to direct the officer to submit to drug and alcohol testing as soon as is practicable.

SB0419 No-Knock Warrants – Elimination. This law repeals the possibility of a police officer entering your home without giving notice. SWAT teams have interpreted their authority too liberally and need now to be constrained.

SB0599 Public Safety – Surplus Military Equipment – Prohibition on Purchase by Law Enforcement Agencies. The Federal military surplus program has equipped our local police with equipment way beyond their needs. We have seen armored cars being turned against

protesters in our cities. How many grenade launchers do our police require? Better judgement needs now to be legislated.

SB0600 Office of the Attorney General – Investigation and Prosecution of Deaths Caused by Police Officers. "Who polices the police?" In the case of extreme use of force, this bill provides that Maryland must allow an independent investigation of what occurred (rather than have police investigate police) and places prosecution in the hands of independent prosecutors.

SB0626 Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force. Current, fear-based policing tactics with insufficient legislative oversight have led to the all-too-often, recurring, tragic and unnecessary killing of civilians. This bill wisely offers explicit, bright-line guidance to police authorities: a clear definition of "lethal force"; examples of "Reasonable alternatives"; and an objective standard of "Imminent threat."

SB0627 Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline. This law has been extensively amended, but nevertheless retains several important components. First, it creates a hearing board for alleged misconduct with 2 out of 3 civilian members; second, it requires central collection and reporting of statistics on police discipline by the Governor's office. LEOBR is not repealed, but civilian review is supported.

What We Need You to Do

Please send a message to your Senator NOW asking for their support better police practices in Maryland.



MAJR is a nonpartisan association of over fifty community organizations and churches with members in every part of the state, formed to support justice reinvestment. Individual supporters include judges, attorneys, corrections professionals, as well as returning citizens, victims, and service providers.

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