



**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 12, 2014**

**SB 542 – Law Enforcement Officers – Entrance-
Level and Annual Training Requirements
(Christopher’s Law)**

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OF MARYLAND

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The ACLU writes to express its strong support for SB 542, a bill that clarifies that all police officers should receive training, consistent with constitutional and law enforcement standards, regarding key lifesaving techniques, the appropriate use of force, cultural and gender diversity, and individuals with disabilities.

The issues addressed by SB 542 are not theoretical. They seek to address real problems that have affected the lives of Marylanders across our state. In the last several years alone, Marylanders have witnessed the tragic choking death of young Christopher Brown at the hands of an off-duty Baltimore County police officer who did not know how to perform CPR; the death of Ethan Saylor, a young man with Down’s syndrome, in the custody of Frederick County police; more than a dozen police-involved deaths in Baltimore City, such as the case of Maurice Johnson, a mentally-ill man who was shot by police at a children’s birthday party after his mother sought help from police to subdue him, and numerous other incidents.

The ACLU routinely learns about serious incidents – across the state – involving the subjects covered in this bill. In Baltimore County, for example, a diabetic pregnant woman going into insulin shock was tasered in front of her young child during a routine traffic stop. An Anne Arundel man having an epileptic seizure was tasered in a shopping center parking lot. In Somerset County, on the Eastern Shore, a Maryland state trooper recorded himself using racial slurs to describe a young African-American woman he wanted to interview as a potential witness.

Each time a life is lost or a person is mistreated or otherwise injured by a law enforcement officer, the question is asked: what can be done to prevent this from happening again? Without fail, one answer comes up over and over again and it is sometimes the only solution everyone can agree on: improvements in training. SB 542 is critical because it helps implement this training up front.

With the extraordinary authority given to law enforcement agencies also comes great responsibility. This bill helps close critical gaps in training to ensure that law enforcement officers are equipped with the tools they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. For these reasons, the ACLU strongly urges you to issue a favorable report for Christopher’s Law, SB 542.