



MARYLAND COALITION FOR JUSTICE & POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

STATEMENT: Coalition of More Than 90 Groups Unite to Say Senate Policing Bills Do Not Do Enough to Save Black Lives

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The following quote can be attributed to Marion Gray Hopkins, President of the Coalition of Concerned Mothers:

“This is insulting and I call on the House of Delegates to do better. I have been so hopeful that this go-round would make a real difference, but when you see how this Senate package waters down police accountability, it feels like a sucker punch. We deserve better, as constituents, Marylanders, and human beings.

“The Senators are not truly hearing what the real experts are saying about what police accountability is needed. Every day, I wish I wasn’t, but I am an expert, because my beloved son, Gary Hopkins Jr, was stolen from me when he was killed by Prince George’s County police. For decades, I have fought for justice and police accountability, and this is not nearly enough.”

Coalition’s Position on Senate Package of Bills

The Senate is poised to push through police reform measures that are small positive steps forward, but that do not match the call for transformative change that emerged from the communities demands spurred by the police killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the years of advocacy in Maryland on this issue.

A real repeal of the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights does not happen in the current posture of SB 627. The bill must include meaningful civilian participation over the discipline of law enforcement, which SB 627, as amended, would not do. Last night, the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee also failed to raise the legal standard for use of force – our most important demand on this issue. Instead, they created an entirely new standard that merely codifies existing law while adding what we believe may be unconstitutional provisions. While Anton’s law is the Senate’s best bill on the issue of policing to come out of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, we hope that the

Senate president and JPR chair will ensure that no weak amendments will be adopted on the floor.

Once again this is an FOP-driven process and the community is told to settle for incremental change that will not save Black lives. The community demands the real change represented by the original intent of the coalition's bills. Some Senators are overcomplicating things and watering the bills down. Instead of listening to communities that have been harmed by police violence, the leadership in the Senate has once again caved to the police unions, who do not represent the broader interest of the senators' voting constituency.

LEOBR Repeal

The community demands the opportunity to have power over the process to discipline police officers that are paid to protect and serve them. Instead, as currently amended, SB 627 would only provide civilian participation in an internal police procedure, which is all it is when you add two civilians to a three-person hearing board, as SB 627 is currently amended to do. And the amended version keeps intact the hearing board structure that disincentivizes police chiefs from disciplining police officers. In sum, the FOP amendments currently in SB 627 make the promise of LEOBR repeal a sham.

Maryland Public Information Act Reform

Anton's Law is the Senate's best bill on the issue of policing to come out of the Judicial Proceedings Committee. We hope that Senate President Bill Ferguson and JPR Chair Will Smith will protect the posture in which this bill was passed.

Use of Force

Maryland is one of only nine states without a statewide use of force statute. If SB 626 as amended by JPR passes into law, Maryland will have a statute that is one of the least protective of Black lives in the country.

Last night, JPR failed to raise the legal standard for use of force – our most important demand on this issue. Instead, they created an entirely new standard that merely codifies existing law while adding what we believe may be unconstitutional provisions.

Specifically, the bill as amended now allows law enforcement officers to use force merely to “gain compliance” or “control a situation.” This standard goes against the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Garner*, and is unconstitutional on its face.

This bill takes power away from families and communities impacted by police violence, keeps it in the hands of the police, and ensures that justice will not be done.

As Senator Charles Sydnor said last night, “I don't know how this bill protects me.” He's right. SB 626 does not.

Organizations in the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability:

Advocates for Children and Youth
ACLU of Maryland
ACLU of Maryland, Montgomery County Chapter
Amnesty International
Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance (AEMS)
Baltimore Abortion Fund
Baltimore Action Legal Team
Baltimore Bern Unit
Baltimore City Civilian Review Board
Baltimore City Democratic Socialists of America
Baltimore Doula Project
Baltimore for Border Justice
Be More Unified
CASA
Caucus of African-Americans Leaders
Central Atlantic Conference United Church of Christ
Citizens Policing Project
Coalition for Justice for Anton Black
Coalition of Concerned Mothers
Coalition of People Opposed Violence and Extremism
Common Cause Maryland
Community Actively Seeking (C.A.S.T.)
Community Justice
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Office in Maryland
Disability Rights Maryland
Do the Most Good
Drug Policy Alliance
Equity Matters
For Kathy's Sake
FreeState Justice
Greater Baltimore Democratic Socialists of America - Steering Committee
Greenbelt People Power
Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association
Homeless Persons Representation Project
Innocence Project
InterFaith Action for Human Rights
Jews United For Justice
Job Opportunities Task Force
Justice for Tyrone West Coalition
Justice Policy Institute
Kevin L. Cooper Foundation
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle
League of Women Voters Maryland
LGBTQ Dignity Project
Life After Release

Making Changes
Mama Sisterhood of Prince George's County
March for Our Lives Maryland
Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition
Maryland Defenders Union
Maryland Justice Project
Maryland Office of the Public Defender
Maryland Poor People's Campaign
Maryland Prisoners' Rights Coalition
Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative
Maryland State Conference of NAACP Branches
Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence
Moms Demand Action
Montgomery County Civil Rights Coalition
Montgomery County Democratic Socialists of America
Mothers on the Move
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Coalition for Drug Legalization
Nigerian American Lawyers Association - Washington DC Chapter
Organizing Black
Our Maryland
Our Prince George's
Our Revolution Maryland
Out For Justice
Planned Parenthood of Maryland
Power Inside
Prevent Gun Violence Ministry, River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Prince George's County Branch of Democratic Socialists of America
Prince George's People's Coalition
Prisons to Professionals
Progressive Maryland
Public Justice Center
Racial Justice NOW!
Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at UMB
Reproductive Justice Inside
Sanctuary DMV
SEIU 1199
Showing up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel county (SURJ3A)
Showing Up for Racial Justice, Baltimore
Showing Up for Racial Justice, Montgomery County
Sierra Club Maryland Chapter
Silver Spring Justice Coalition
Takoma Park Mobilization
The JustUs Initiative

The CHOICE Program at UMBC
Wicomico County NAACP Branch 7028
Women's Law Center
Young People for Progress

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