



**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
March 12, 2015**

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**HB 954 – Public Safety – Deaths Involving a Law Enforcement Officer --
Reports**

SUPPORT

The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 954, which would require law enforcement agencies to report on officer-involved deaths and on deaths of officers in the line of duty. In order to understand the magnitude of an issue – or whether there is an issue – we need to understand the facts. In the State of Maryland, we do not have a formal means by which to understand how many Marylanders die at the hands of police, or how many police die in the line of duty.

The ACLU of Maryland has spent the last year compiling public records on Marylanders who have died as a result of encounters with police. It was a difficult and arduous job, because public records only tell so much. Our work uncovered that over 100 people have died as a result of encounters with the police between 2010 – 2014. Since then we have found out that other people have done this research and come up with a much larger number – closer to 150 people. Regardless of which number is correct, two things are true: there is a shockingly large number of people who die at the hands of police in Maryland; and we need to know the number in order to understand our State and how our police are operating. Contrary to what many may believe, it is not just a “Ferguson issue” or a “Staten Island issue.” Problems with policing, tense and challenging police-community relations, exist here in Maryland. And unless and until we understand the magnitude of the problem, we cannot begin to fix it.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland supports HB 954.

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