

## **LWVMC Testimony to Montgomery County Council re MC Bill 49-21 (Enabling Legislation for Police Accountability Board and Administrative Charging Committee)**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the council. My name is Cynthia Boddie-Willis, and I am here to testify in opposition to expedited Bill 49-21 on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County.

The League has long held that governmental bodies, both administrative and legislative, must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions. Regrettably, the process by which Bill 49-21 has been drafted by the County's Executive Office and introduced in the County Council has not satisfied this basic requirement of good governance. This despite repeated requests for public hearings.

On October 28, [in a letter to the County Executive \(CE\) and County Council \(CC\)](#), the Silver Spring Justice Coalition (SSJC) called for public hearings prior to the drafting of legislation to create the Police Accountability Board (PAB) and the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC) mandated by the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021. On December 10, the SSJC learned that a bill written by the County Executive would be introduced in the County Council on December 14, with no community input. On December 12, the SSJC, joined by the League and 18 other community and advocacy organizations called, again, for public hearings before the bill is introduced. On December 13, the SSJC and the ACLU of Maryland issued a [press release](#) calling for the County Executive to withdraw the bill and for the County Executive and the County Council to hold public hearings to gather community input.

Despite these efforts, expedited Bill 49-21 was introduced to the County Council on December 14, without any community input. As a result, the voices of the citizenry at large, but most especially of those who have had the most interactions with the police and who are the most impacted by police practices, were neither sought nor heard.

The League also promotes an open governmental system where all aspects of that system are not only accountable and responsive but also representative. Expedited Bill 49-21 currently stipulates that all members of the PAB have experience in (1) managing or evaluating the management of a law enforcement agency; (2) evaluating citizen complaints against a police officer; or (3) personnel disciplinary proceedings as a manager, employee representative, mediator, or arbitrator. This requirement would seem to severely restrict the pool of eligible participants, forcing the League to take issue with this aspect of the bill as well.

However, expedited Bill 49-21 did call for today's public hearing, and the County Council has kept its promise to hold the public hearing in the evening rather than during regular business hours. It is the League's further expectation that all who wish to testify either for or against this bill will be given the opportunity to do so. These measures are needed to enable community engagement to the greatest extent possible as well as to help ensure that the amended bill is true to the intent of the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021.