



January 13, 2022

Mr. Gabe Albornoz
President, Montgomery County Council
Montgomery County Councilmembers
Stella Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Testimony on Police Accountability Bill 49-21

Dear Mr. Albornoz and Montgomery County Council Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify on Bill 49-21 Police Accountability Board. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

By now, you have seen the disturbing data and statistics on excessive use of force by law enforcement in Montgomery County. Under House Bill 670, which passed through the General Assembly last year, each jurisdiction in Maryland is mandated to create police accountability boards and administrative charging committees to investigate and resolve police misconduct complaints by the public, and we are glad to see the Montgomery County Council move on this issue. However, we have some concerns we hope that you can address.

A robust measure that will have a meaningful impact on accountability requires expansive community buy-in – particularly from those members of the public who are most directly and disproportionately impacted by problematic policing policies.

As the bill currently stands, it requires that board members have prior experience in management in a law enforcement agency, evaluating citizen complaints against police officers and mediation or personnel disciplinary proceedings. This unfairly excludes a large segment of potentially otherwise capable and qualified candidates from consideration, and may perpetuate problematic aspects of current policing practices. Bill 49-21 also does not guarantee equitable representation from Montgomery County's diverse districts.

The legislation mandating the establishment of police accountability boards was already significantly watered down to exclude enforcement capabilities. Not allowing space for substantive, meaningful community input defeats the objective of establishing such boards in the first place.

The Office of Legislative Oversight has released a Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) impact statement that offers meaningful amendments to help make Bill 49-21 more effectively align with best practices to advance civilian oversight and improve police accountability. Among these amendments, we urge you to especially consider approving a request to expand the scope of the misconduct complaints that PAB's can review.

We respectfully urge a favourable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.
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Council on American-Islamic Relations
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