

Testimony – Montgomery County Democratic Socialists of America  
Montgomery County Bill 49-21

Hello, I'm Nicole Zimmerman. I'm the chair of the Montgomery County Democratic Socialists of America and I'm testifying on behalf of DSA. We have over 500 members in Montgomery County, from across the county and spanning from high school students in Montgomery County Public Schools to retirees. We were happy to join a community letter in December asking County Executive Marc Elrich to engage the community before releasing a draft Police Accountability Board legislation and we were dismayed when the county executive released a bill without community input.

What's more, the current bill, as drafted, fails to meet the spirit of the state bill and shift power away from the police and towards impacted communities. For example, the bill requires that members of the police accountability board have experience in managing or evaluating the management of a law enforcement agency; evaluating citizen complaints against police officers; and/or personnel disciplinary proceedings. Under these criteria, community members with experience dealing with the Montgomery County Police are unlikely to be eligible to serve on the board, while many former MCPD employees would likely be eligible.

We also know that certain Montgomery County communities are over-policed and the legislation fails to require regional representation. The county executive's reimagining public safety report recommended the county reduce the number of sworn officer full-time employees in police Districts 3 and 4 by 50 percent to reduce patrol officer contact with residents in these districts, given that these districts had double or triple the number of use of force incidents as other districts and that Black residents were disproportionately stopped by police. Additionally, we are concerned that this legislation excludes police leadership from the accountability board's oversight.

DSA was a part of the electoral coalition that got County Executive Elrich into office and since then we've routinely been disappointed with Elrich over policing issues. We recommend that the county executive and the council seriously overhaul this legislation, in collaboration with the community before advancing any further.