

Melissa Coretz Goemann  
Silver Spring, MD

## Testimony Against Unless Amended

### Bill 49-21 (Enabling Legislation for Police Accountability Board and Administrative Charging Committee)

January 14, 2021

**To: Montgomery County Council**  
**From: Melissa Coretz Goemann**

My name is Melissa Coretz Goemann and my family and I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland in District 5 for over a decade. I write this testimony in opposition to MC Bill 49-21 unless amended in order to significantly strengthen the bill. I am testifying on behalf of myself, and I am a member of the Silver Spring Justice Coalition.

In 2018, Robert White, a valued member of our Silver Spring community, was shot and killed by a Montgomery County police officer after being stopped because he looked suspicious due to a ripped jacket and hands in his pockets. I went with my daughter to a vigil for him shortly after he was killed and we were very moved by the heartbreaking testimony of his family, friends, and neighbors. This was a man who had been beloved in his community. Sadly, I have been to more vigils since then for men killed by Montgomery County police; Robert White's killing was followed by six more killings of individuals by members of law enforcement agencies in our County.

The Jewish precept, *destroy a life and it's as if you destroyed the world*, is a very important value to me. Destroying these lives has been devastating to our Montgomery County communities. As police violence and destruction continues, we must take action. Police carry deadly force. As a result, they carry a heavy responsibility and must be accountable to the community. The intent of the Maryland Police Accountability Act (MPAA), which mandated the creation of new police disciplinary boards, was to provide this police accountability to the community through enforceable civilian oversight of policing. [The Office of Legislative oversight's powerful RESJ Impact Statement](#) clearly states how this proposed county bill does not accomplish that, stating that ***"the PAB [Bill 49-21] proposes is analogous to the current police accountability system."***

In order to establish a system to provide true police accountability to the community, it is essential that community members have input in designing that system. In this case, no community input was sought in drafting this bill and as a result it does not reflect the needs and desires of the community, particularly those that have been most impacted by police misconduct. Moreover, the Police Accountability Board (PAB) created by this bill would end up

excluding community members most impacted by policing, rather than ensuring true community involvement in the police disciplinary process, as was the intent of the MPAA. Instead, the criteria that the bill establishes for members of the PAB, as well as the fact that no compensation is provided for members of the PAB it what will undoubtedly be a very labor intensive position, will end up perpetuating the status quo for police discipline in Montgomery County and continue to shut the community out of the process.

Finally, the PAB must be provided with its own independent counsel and staff if it is to engage in the responsibilities delegated to it by the MPAA with integrity and have the trust of the community. It is an outrageous conflict of interest for the bill to appoint the County Attorney to serve as PAB counsel when the County Attorney already represents the Montgomery County police and the County.

I urge you not to pass this bill until you make substantial amendments in line with the recommendations described above.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Coretz Goemann