

Jo Shifrin  
Silver Spring, MD

## **Testimony Against Unless Amended - Bill 49-21 (Enabling Legislation for Police Accountability Board and Administrative Charging Committee)**

**January 18, 2021**

Hello. My name is Jo Shifrin, I live in Bethesda, in County District 1, and I am here to ask for significant amendments to Montgomery County Bill 49-21.

Growing up as a white Jewish girl, my view of police was that they were friendly and helpful. However, as an adult I've come to understand that many police officers are racially biased and the system of policing in our country is rooted in racism against Black and brown people. I am deeply upset when I look at the data on police shootings. In 2021, 6 men were unjustifiably killed by police in Montgomery County: Kwamena Ocran, Kevin Costlow, Dominique Williams, James Johnson, Ryan LeRoux, and Osman Sesay. 5 of these men were Black and 1 was white, which reflects that police shootings disproportionately fall on people of color. Two of them were in a mental health crisis. No one should ever be killed for being sick and not in control of themselves. Especially when Montgomery County has invested significant resources into a program that provides mental health counselors, who are trained in the way to approach people going through a mental health crisis.

These police killings aren't the only instances of police misconduct that I am concerned about. When I watched the video of two police officers abusing the 5 year old from East Silver Spring Elementary School, I was in tears. Judaism recognizes that the wellbeing of society is determined by our treatment of children. If this is the typical treatment of children by the Montgomery County Police Department, heaven help us.

I am also dismayed about the way that this bill was introduced. There was no community input before the bill introduction, despite the County Executive's promise of transparency. And now that the [Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement has been released](#), I ask that you please ensure Bill 49-21 is significantly amended to reflect the OLO's recommendations.

The Maryland Police Accountability Act, which was designed to give communities greater control and oversight of police misconduct – in part by the creation of community involved Police Advisory Boards in every county – is undermined by the design of the Police Advisory Board proposed by Montgomery County bill #49-21.

This bill excludes people without law enforcement backgrounds from being eligible for the Police Advisory Board. This criteria all but ensures that our PAB will look like our current MCPD hearing board and will perpetuate the status quo. How is that progress?

I am also concerned that the bill does not compensate PAB members for their hard work. I ask that you please ensure members of the PAB are fairly compensated. I am similarly concerned that the bill does not guarantee sufficient staffing for the various Police Disciplinary Boards, which must be changed to reflect the boards' needs. Lastly, I ask that you please ensure that the PAB has an independent legal council: the current County Attorney's office, which serves the Council and MCPD, cannot be appropriate support for the PAB without conflicts of interest.

Suffice it to say that I strongly oppose this bill and respectfully urge the Council to listen to those in the community most affected by police misconduct, and substantially amend Bill 49-21.

Thank you for your time.