



**Silver Spring Justice Coalition Testimony in Opposition to Bill 27-23
Repeal of Policing Advisory Commission**

My name is Susaanti Follingstad and I am testifying on behalf of the Silver Spring Justice Coalition in opposition to the repeal of the Policing Advisory Commission.

SSJC works to reduce the harms of policing while empowering communities. Critical to both of these efforts is giving voice to those impacted by policing. It is important that the diverse communities that make up this County have as many opportunities to be heard as possible, and therefore we support having the PAC, in addition to the Police Accountability Board, to advise on matters of policing.

The PAC was enacted specifically to advise the County Council. The members of the PAC are diverse and dedicated, and while we may not agree with their every decision, we think the Council can still benefit from their analysis and input. For example, the PAC's report on MCPD's discriminatory traffic enforcement is an important statistical and policy analysis, with sound recommendations. The PAC has issued several other policy papers, and it has held several valuable community listening sessions.

I want to address some misconceptions about the relationship between the PAC and PAB:

First, there is no meaningful confusion about the PAB and PAC. They have operated concurrently for almost 12 months, and there has been no indication that there has been confusion about their roles and responsibilities. To our knowledge there have been no efforts to file police complaints with the PAC, and no one attends the PAC meetings thinking they are the PAB, or vice versa.

Second, there has been no indication that the PAC's role of advising the Council is in conflict with the role of the PAB, which, as specified by state and county statute, is to advise the Council, the County Executive and our law enforcement agencies. If these entities provided conflicting advice on a particular issue, that would only make this Council's decision on that issue better-informed, and is certainly not a reason to disband the PAC.

Third, on more than one occasion, the PAC has complained that the Council has not been as receptive to their recommendations as it should be and that the MCPD has too often been unresponsive to the PAC's requests. These should not be reasons to disband the PAC;

instead, they should be reasons to improve communication and provide more support to the PAC in furthering their mission.

Lastly, the PAB has been operating for less than a year, and it would be premature for the Council to decide that it renders the PAC unnecessary. However, it is critically important that in considering this bill the Council take no action to limit or constrain the scope of current or potential activities of the PAB. State law grants the PAB a broad mandate to advise on all matters of policing. We strongly oppose any efforts to limit the PAB's authority in order to justify the continuation of the PAC.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.