

September 8, 2023

Testimony on PAC Bill 32-23

From: Gary L. Frace

I would first like to thank the members of the County Council for their willingness to hear my views on this proposed bill. Elected officials listening to and considering the views of their constituents is a foundational aspect of a democracy.

I am 71 years old and have resided in Montgomery County my entire life. I am a retired MCPS teacher having spent 40 years teaching Social Studies at Springbrook High School where I still coach Cross Country. During my years at Springbrook, I helped to institute our "Justice, Law, and Society" signature. In that program I taught a variety of government and law related courses and thus became very familiar with policing on the federal, state, and local levels. In addition, while we still had the SRO program, which I hope will be reinstated, I got to work firsthand with the officers assigned to our school. From my interactions with them as well as many officers throughout the county, including some of my former students, I, like all of you, know what a difficult and demanding job it is to be a police officer today. We owe a great deal of gratitude to the women and men who serve our community as police officers.

As in any government related profession, there are times when a citizen may feel that an individual has not acted in an appropriate manner in accordance with set guidelines/regulations, etc. Fortunately, Montgomery County has an excellent police force and these complaints, though worthy, are not in great numbers. However, when complaints do arise, they need to be investigated thoroughly and fairly. The current Police Advisory Commission (PAC) is that body charged with this. Currently there are no members representing the police on the PAC. It is obvious to me, and others, that this is a glaring omission. Along with the other members, that addition, as proposed in PAC Bill 32-23 would be resolved by having two members, a representative of the FOP and a Chief's designee on the commission. These two new members, who would also be voting members, would be able to clearly provide insight, knowledge, and experience concerning policing that the other members do not have. Their addition would add greatly to both equity and comprehensiveness to the commission. Can you imagine having a commission like this charged with investigating complaints against physicians and

not having any physicians on it. Absolutely not. The PAC, which would also be renamed the "Police Accountability Board" (PAB), needs to do the same. Anything less would be tantamount to a profound error by the County Council and would, to many citizens, demonstrate a lack of fairness and professionalism.

I implore the members of the Council to do the right thing, the equitable thing, the democratic thing, and pass PAC Bill 32-23.

Sincerely,
Gary L. Frace