



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SB 285 County Police Accountability Boards - Investigation of Complaints of Police Misconduct

Position: Favorable

By: Nancy Soreng, President

Date: February 14, 2023

The League of Women Voters supports a criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices. We also support collaboration between government and community throughout every stage of the criminal justice system.

We were proud to support many of the reforms that were passed by this body in 2021 including the mandate that Maryland counties and Baltimore City create Police Accountability Boards (PABs). Many of our local Leagues engaged with their governing bodies as they worked to determine the membership, the appointment process, and most importantly, the authority that these boards would have in providing oversight of police misconduct and discipline. This bill will clarify the law passed in 2021 to specifically authorize local jurisdictions to provide their PABs with the power to conduct independent investigations and have subpoena power. This is something that local governments have been hesitant to do.

The whole point of PABs is to provide an independent, community based body that has the power to actually investigate and understand what happened or did not happen that led to a complaint of police misconduct and to assess the quality of the internal investigations conducted by the police themselves. Passage of this bill will allow the Police Accountability Boards to actually fulfill their mandate. Without this authority, they can only evaluate investigations based on what is provided to them by the investigating body.

We urge a favorable report on SB 285.