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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you are well aware, law enforcement officers across the country are under attack. Here, in Maryland, many politicians are fueling a narrative of division; one that demonizes law enforcement officers and categorizes us as “the enemy.” This dangerous narrative also suggests that we can’t be trusted to perform our duties in a fair and impartial manner, and that we lack professionalism – ultimately requiring unprecedented legislative reforms.

For the past few years, special interest groups have gained traction in their attempts to make our jobs more difficult and less safe. This year is no different. Due to several police-involved incidents that have garnered national attention this year, the Maryland General Assembly is considering a bevy of changes to agency “Use of Force” policies and to the Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights.

Over the summer and into the fall, both the Maryland House of Delegates and the State Senate participated in workgroups aimed at making recommendations on the future of policing.

Maryland House of Delegates

Speaker of the House, Adrienne Jones, formed a workgroup to address police reform and accountability in Maryland. The committee was chaired by Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary. Several virtual meetings were held, and the FOP was given the opportunity to speak on the recommendations under consideration.

Following a clear unwillingness by leaders of the workgroup to communicate or work with the FOP, the workgroup agreed to make all but one of the recommendations that they considered to the House Judiciary Committee during the upcoming session.

Representing the Professional Police Officers of the State of Maryland

Their final decision will send 12 recommendations forward to be placed in one all-inclusive bill. Many of the recommendations have several parts to them. The recommendation that would have taken the prosecution of Officers from the local State's Attorneys and moved it to the Attorney General's Office was the only recommendation that was not accepted by the workgroup.

For those that would like to watch any of the virtual meetings that were held or see any of the agendas, written testimony, etc... use the below link.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Committees/Details?cmte=pra>

For those that would like to see a summary of the 12 Recommendations (with all their parts) that were sent to the Judiciary Committee see the House Recommendations Attachment.

Maryland Senate

Like the House of Delegates, the Maryland Senate also held virtual meetings regarding police reform. Unlike the House of Delegates, Senator Smith, chairman of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, tasked Senators Carter and Sydnor with drafting legislation on police accountability and reform. The 3 Senators put forward a total of 14 draft bills to be discussed over 3 days. Prior to the start of the virtual meetings, the State FOP was assured by Senator Smith that we would be given advanced notice of the issues to be considered by his committee. Unfortunately, we were not provided any information by Senator Smith. We were given the opportunity to speak for only a few minutes each day regarding several topics (only given approx. 3 minutes on the LEOBR package, which was over 40 pages in length).

The bills are now to be amended based on input from the 3 days of hearings and the Judicial Proceedings Committee will then continue to discuss these bills in the upcoming legislative session.

For those that would like to watch any of the 3 days of virtual meetings that were held (September 22-24) or see any of the agendas, written testimony, etc... use the below link.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Committees/Details?cmte=jpr>

For those that would like to see a discussion summary of the bills considered by the Senate Committee see the Senate Recommendations Attachment.

Additionally, during the 2016 session, Senator Ferguson had legislation passed to form a commission to study the Baltimore Police Department, Gun Trace Task Force. The Commission to Restore Trust in Policing has been conducting interviews and investigating how members of the GTTF were able to engage in the activity which led them to be criminally charged and convicted. The Commission has now morphed into an additional review of the LEOBR. The Commission's report is scheduled to be released soon, and many of the issues under discussion in the Senate's Judicial Proceedings Committee are likely to be addressed in the Commission's report. *For those that would like to watch any of the virtual meetings that were held or see any of the agendas, written testimony, etc... use the below link.*

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Committees/Details?cmte=RTP>

As you can clearly see, we are in for the fight of our lives in this upcoming legislative session. As a result of the change of stance of many in the legislature, the climate we now find ourselves in, and the change in the way business is conducted due to COVID-19, we will be fighting an uphill battle. To have any success in avoiding a complete overhaul of the policing profession in Maryland we will have to explore using different strategies and changing the way we have operated in Annapolis in the past. If we do not, the end result will be the loss of many of our rights, our due process, and our ability to effectively perform our jobs without fear of discipline or incarceration when making split second decisions while defending ourselves or others. We are currently looking at different options and will keep the membership informed as we move forward with our Agenda and talking points for the upcoming legislative session.

As President of the State Fraternal Order of Police, it is important that I keep you updated on the fight to protect our rights, and to make you aware of critical issues that will impact the future of our profession. I want you to rest assured that the FOP Legislative Committee, Executive Board, lobbyists and General Counsel are doing everything in our power to bring the fight on your behalf. As we continue that work, I will provide you with additional updates on our progress and will be asking for your assistance in getting our unified message out to the public at large. We hope to have our unified message and talking points finalized and out to the membership by the end of December. In the interim, please read and use the attached LEOBR facts talking points attachment and/or Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights Primer PowerPoint attachment to educate yourselves with and to discuss the LEOBR with members of your community.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and for the heroic work you do every day.

Representing the Professional Police Officers of the State of Maryland

Happy Holiday's and STAY SAFE!!!!

Fraternally,

Clyde E. Boatwright, State President
Maryland State Lodge
Fraternal Order of Police

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