



HB0194 – Criminal Procedure – Police Officers and Public Defenders – Implicit Bias – Testing, Training, and Evaluation

Presented to the Hon. Luke Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee
February 16, 2021 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB0194 – Criminal procedure – Police Officers and Public Defenders – Implicit Bias – Testing, Training, and Evaluation**, sponsored by Delegate Melissa Wells.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. Accordingly, we believe it is a basic human right that everybody be able to raise their children and families without fear of violence at the hands of the state or law enforcement.

Fear of police brutality and violence seriously impacts if and how an individual chooses to raise their family. Violence against Black men and women harms not only the victim, but their families and communities as well. The trauma of watching the loss of Black lives on video, social media, and even through personal relationships undoubtedly incites constant terror and wariness, which influences one's personal reproductive choices and options. Reproductive justice argues that it is a basic right for families to live in an environment free of police violence.

The over-policing and racial stereotyping seen in Black communities has been a long-standing problem within America. In 2020, 1,127 people were killed by police officers; 28% (316) of these individuals were Black, despite Black Americans only making up 13% of the population. Additionally, Black people were three times more likely to be killed by police than their white counterparts¹. It is the duty of law enforcement officers to protect the people they serve, regardless of their race; racial bias has evidently impacted the way police officers react to and observe situations. Mandatory implicit bias training for police officers is essential to reducing, and eventually preventing, racialized police brutality.

Black women experience high levels of police violence and brutality, yet they are often ignored and silenced by media. A 2014 NAACP report found that although Black and white girls have similar rates of misconduct, Black girls are subjected to arrest far more often². Police violence and bias weighs heavily on the lives and

¹ Mapping Police Violence. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.

² McClellan, Cara. "Opinion: The Silence Around Police Violence Against Black Women." HuffPost. HuffPost, May 5, 2018. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/opinion-mcclellan-Black-women-police_n_5aeb5b6be4b0ab5c3d634fd5.

experiences of Black women: “Black women bear a double burden – carrying the weight of a weaponized skin color and the invisibility of a silenced gender”.

HB0194 would enforce a mandatory implicit bias training for Maryland Police Officers, as well as publicize data regarding tests and evaluation on implicit bias. Not only will this increase awareness in our law enforcement officers, but it will also allow Maryland residents, especially those of color, to feel safer in their own communities. A recent study in implicit bias training in the NYPD found that after their training, NYPD officers expressed more awareness of the concept of implicit bias and greater willingness to try to manage it³.

Furthermore, as advocates of reproductive justice, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges that the implicit bias training involve curriculum on the criminalization of pregnant individuals. Pregnant individuals are subjected to forms of police violence and harm often because of a lack of police protocol for such situations. In many precincts and jails, pregnant persons are subjects to practices – such as shackling or the denial of food, clothing, and medical care – which jeopardizes their wellbeing, and the wellbeing of any child they intend to have. Pregnancy criminalization laws have significantly increased the number of women forced to endure dehumanizing, violent, and sometimes pregnancy-threatening conditions⁴. Including such curriculum in the implicit bias training promoted by HB0194 would significantly improve the way pregnant individuals are treated by law enforcement.

Centuries worth of systematic racism and racialized policing in America has resulted in a deep-rooted fear and mistrust of law enforcement, yet there is opportunity for change. Mandatory implicit bias training for Police Officers is the first step is securing a better relationship between communities of color and law enforcement, as well as ensuring the well-being of all Maryland residents. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB0194**. Thank you for your time and consideration.



³ Kaste, Martin. “Nypd Study: Implicit Bias Training Changes Minds, Not Necessarily Behavior,” September 10, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/10/909380525/nypd-study-implicit-bias-training-changes-minds-not-necessarily-behavior>.

⁴ Law, Victoria, Jared Rodriguez / Truthout, Victoria LawVictoria Law is a freelance journalist who focuses on the intersections of incarceration, and Dani McClain. “Your Pregnancy May Subject You to Even More Law Enforcement Violence.” Truthout. Truthout, October 22, 2018. <https://truthout.org/articles/your-pregnancy-may-subject-you-to-even-more-law-enforcement-violence/>.