



HOWARD COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LR0853

My name is Captain Christopher Williams and I wish to offer testimony on behalf of Chief Lisa Myers, Howard County Chief of Police, who was committed to another event, when the opportunity arose to testify on this proposed legislation.

I serve as the Chief of Staff for the Howard County Police and have 16 years of law enforcement experience. In my various assignments, from being a patrol officer, to being the supervisor of the Repeat Offender Proactive Enforcement Section, to being a midnight Watch Commander for patrol, I have seen first hand the impact of alcohol violations impacting our youth and related collisions devastating our community.

We are proud to work with Councilmember Jung and County Executive Calvin Ball to adjust current regulations in regard to the inspection of liquor establishments in Howard County. Chief Myers is grateful to Senator Lam for introducing this needed legislation.

I appear before you tonight, because Howard County is one of only three jurisdictions in Maryland that still require a sworn law enforcement officer to serve as the Liquor Inspector. St. Mary's and Charles County still mandate a sworn officer/deputy, but even they utilize part-time civilian Inspectors to support the mission.

The Howard County Police Department is working with legislators to adjust the laws to permit non-sworn inspections of liquor establishments, by mirroring legislative language used throughout the State. All of the jurisdictions surrounding Howard County utilize trained civilian inspectors.

The advantages of this minor change in law, include:

- Doubling the number of inspections that can be conducted each year, without a fiscal impact within Howard County. Two civilian inspectors can be hired and trained within the funding budgeted for one sworn police officer and all associated police equipment.
- Dramatically increasing the visibility and frequency of an inspector at each licensed establishments.
- More focus on each liquor establishment's practices. A sworn law enforcement officer is required to engage in extensive training and activities beyond his Liquor Inspector assignment. Civilian Inspectors would only have to invest in directly related training and duties, more time would be focused on routine inspections and compliance checks.

In early 2018, the Howard County Alcoholic Beverage Hearing Board (ABHB) Chair, Mr. Gene Ryan recommended the reclassification of the Alcoholic Beverage Inspector, to Councilmember Deb Jung who serves as the Chair of the Board of License Commissioners for Howard County. In his February 8, 2018 memorandum he stated that the requirement for a sworn inspector was "well intentioned, it has counter intuitively limited the effective enforcement of alcoholic beverage regulations within our County. As it limits inspections and enforcement to a single inspector and requires that individual to be a sworn police officer."

There are 289 liquor establishments in Howard County. We need to adjust the law to allow for trained civilian inspectors to more effectively inspect all establishments on a more frequent basis.

Specially trained civilian inspectors have been effectively used throughout the State of Maryland for many years for inspections regarding Alcoholic Beverages, Cigarette sales, Massage establishments, and well as other types of inspection and enforcement. Civilian inspectors complete relevant training and remain focused on their limited area of responsibility. Sworn officers have competing demands and often get promoted and/or transferred out of their specialty. Civilian inspectors work with sworn law enforcement, whenever needed.

Civilian inspectors would have the authority to inspect and issue civil citations. They would not have the authority to carry a firearm nor make arrests. Our Sworn Inspector has not needed to make an arrest during his tenure in this assignment.

Frequently, agencies such as ours, hired retired police officers to perform these types of functions. We currently have several retired police officers working as civilian employees who perform law enforcement duties that do not require arrest powers. We currently have several civilian Background Investigators, as one example.

The enabling legislation simply brings Howard County into line with all of the surrounding jurisdictions and allows us to increase our outreach and efficiency to better combat liquor violations and underage drinking.

We greatly appreciate your assistance and support in regards to this legislation. I will gladly handle any questions you may have at this time.

Drafted 11/1/9/19 T. G. Bulla