

July 9, 2019

Sent via email:

The Honorable Nancy Navarro, President, Montgomery County Council,  
And other Montgomery County Council Members  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

**Re: Bill 14-19, Police – Policing Advisory Commission Established**

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council:

The Montgomery County League of Women Voters adopted a position in 1994 **in support of pro-active preventive policing in Montgomery County**, including positions to support (1) increased funding in technical areas and (2) increased funding in personnel to implement pro-active/preventive policing. **We see this proposed Advisory Commission as an opportunity to further support a pro-active police presence in our county.**

In Mr. Riemer's March 29 letter to his fellow Councilmembers he states: "Recent events in our County and the growing national dialogue about the role and practices of police, particularly in communities of color, have put a sharp focus on trust, transparency and accountability." **The League concurs with the need for an advisory body to support and enhance pro-active community policing at this time.**

In addition, we wonder if the establishment of such a commission might be an opportunity not only to provide input from the community to the Police Department but also for the Police Department to provide input to the communities they serve.

**We therefore suggest a broadening of the Duties of the Commission** [found in sub-section (e) of the proposed legislation] **to include support for additional outreach** from the Department to our residents.

For instance, subsection (e)(5) might include -- in addition to "at least one public forum each year for community input on policing matters" -- at least one public forum for a police presentation(s) to the community on the ways in which county residents can be supportive of pro-active/preventive policing.

Also -- using the concept of a true teamwork approach to building trust between the Police and our residents, **we would also suggest that voting membership on the commission not be limited to public members but include voting representation from the Police Department.**

LWVMC recognizes and shares the real worry that residents of color and others have when a wrong move or a wrong word can turn deadly. We therefore believe that the first need is to provide a strong voice for those residents who see themselves not as persons whom police officers are sworn to support. We hope, however, that as the Council considers this legislation, the opportunity to build a community where both police officers and county residents work together to make their communities safe is not lost.

We look forward to working with the Council to build a Policing Advisory Commission that can be a national model of teamwork between those who serve to protect and those whom they are pledged to protect.

Sincerely,

Diane Hibino, co-president

Kathy McGuire, co-president