

From: **Gregory Will** <geandsbwill@aol.com>
Date: Fri, May 14, 2021 at 4:12 PM
Subject: Thank you for this opportunity
To: <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

To whom it may concern,

It has come to my attention that the legislature is considering a bill that would allow the general public access to law enforcement personnel employment records. I am afraid that many members of the general public, and the government bodies across this nation, are headed down a slippery slope. Defunding of departments, "reimagining of departments", dissolving of qualified immunity, and now the examination of these personnel records most surely will end with disastrous results. The very people, those well intended persons, that they are seeking to protect by this type of legislation, will ultimately result in law enforcement that is feckless. It is happening all across this country, and the citizens, especially those in high crime areas, are the continued victims, less of police brutality and improper behavior, than of officers that are no longer willing to risk their lives. There are elements that would choose to attack officers both physically and professionally.

First, it is highly commendable that the legislature is seeking the end of bad behavior exhibited by such a very small number of people that represent law enforcement. I have been fortunate to have worked for two police departments in the Commonwealth of Virginia. I left one because I wanted to become a member of a department that had a standard that I considered to be the pinnacle of professionalism. I therefore fully agree that there is a need to focus on the problem. This, however, will open the door for those in the community, and sadly even some in the legislature, who are malcontents and wish to attack officers unnecessarily. As you know, no group of persons collectively is immune from having a bad apple in the barrel, not law enforcement, not the clergy, not politicians, not ANY group. However, it is completely unfair to throw out the barrel for the rotten few. Hypothetically, an effective officer seeking to arrest the drug dealer that is victimizing a community, both through the activity of selling the drugs and "enforcing" his territory; could be targeted by the dealer and his associates by continually complaining and seeking to create enough innuendo that the officer would ultimately tire of being harassed, and resign or be subjected to improperly applied punishment. The same could be said for those "groups" in the community that continually harass officers that display the dedication necessary to enforce the laws of the Commonwealth.

Secondly, I would think that the passing of such legislation would ultimately result in wasted expenditures of the Commonwealth's budget as it surely would be challenged in the Courts. After the issues that have faced not only the Commonwealth, but nearly the entire nation, I would submit that there MUST be an alternative to this most recent proposal. I can envision a body that could further scrutinize the actions, or lack thereof, regarding departments that failed to act on improper action by officers. I would highly recommend against civilian review boards, as they can become as corrupt, if not worse, than the very department that they seek to improve.

Lastly, I would implore that each member of the legislature take the opportunity, if they have not already done so, to come speak with the departments that are within their voting districts. They should come to the table literally, and share a meal, talk with the officers, however tentative they may be. They need to experience the "shoot don't shoot simulators" to see exactly just how fast an officer's life can end or even worse, the tragic results presented by a "perfect storm." Upon the completion of these actions, they should absolutely ride with street officers (while wearing relaxed clothing, not suits and dresses) between 10 PM and 3 AM, in the worst crime districts within the jurisdiction. This alone can be incredibly "eye opening."

I implore you to choose a different path to a clearly recognized issue that must be resolved. I have no idea what alternatives that you have on the table to help correct some previous improper conduct; but this type of action will turn a slippery slope into an avalanche. Thank each of you for your continued attention in this matter and for your service to the Commonwealth. We can fix this.

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