

PRESS RELEASE

Wiley Represents Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability As Pro Bono Counsel in Defending Community Transparency for Records of Police Misconduct

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Washington D.C.- Wiley is representing the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability (MCJPA) along with the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland (ACLU of Maryland) as pro bono counsel in a lawsuit filed by the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 35 (FOP) in Montgomery County that would block public access to records of police misconduct.

In its brief, MCJPA seeks to intervene to ask the court first to unseal proceedings in the case, and then to reject the FOP's lawsuit, which stemmed from a side deal between the FOP and Montgomery County that improperly gives the union notice of requests under Maryland's Public Information Act for police misconduct records.

"If FOP's claims succeed in this case, it could set a dangerous legal precedent. We are defending the community transparency protections at the core of Anton's Law, which was passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2021 to build trust between police and community members," said Wiley partner Mary Borja, who represented MCJPA alongside Ashley Criss from Wiley.

"This filing is critical to maintaining the spirit of Anton's Law," said Zakiya Sankara-Jabar, Co-founder & Co-Director at Racial Justice NOW, a member of MCJPA. "Police officers in Montgomery County must be held accountable to the same standards as all other officers

Related Professionals

Mary E. Borja
Partner
202.719.4252
mborja@wiley.law
Ashley L. Criss
Partner
202.719.3565
acriss@wiley.law

who are supposed to abide by this state law. No special treatment. We hope that this legal action will prevent the intolerable executions of Black men in our community at the hands of the police.”

“Through their lawsuit, and their side deal with Montgomery County, the FOP is trying to set itself up as an independent custodian of police misconduct records, and to use the judiciary to achieve what they failed to accomplish in the legislature – denying public access to police misconduct records,” said David Rocah, senior staff attorney at the ACLU of Maryland. “That is legally impermissible, and dangerous public policy, and we hope that the courts will not allow it.”

MCJPA is represented by Mary Borja and Ashley Criss from Wiley, and by Deborah Jeon, David Rocah, Sonia Kumar, and Nick Taichi Steiner from the ACLU of Maryland.