

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jan. 5, 2016

Contact

Shabrei Parker, Esq.
shabrei.parker@gmail.com
215-587-0006

**THE BARRISTERS' ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA, INC.
OPPOSES HOUSE BILL 1538**

House Bill 1538 (HB1538), pending before the Senate Law and Justice Committee, legally mandates concealing the identities of police officers involved in shootings and other "use of force" scenarios. It prohibits any agency or employee from disclosing the officer's identity unless and until after the completion of an official investigation. Following the completion of an investigation, it further shields officer identity unless and until the officer(s) are formally charged with a crime. Finally, if all of those conditions have been met, if there have been any "threats" to the involved officer(s), their families or their property, the names will not be released.

Very recent history demonstrates the astonishing infrequency of formal criminal charges against police officers, and the Bill doesn't guarantee or even suggest that formal criminal charges will be contemplated.

To stand by and watch hard fought civil rights be stripped without demanding that the needs of our communities be considered is to defy the very legacy upon which we stand. Accepting such legislation would be an acknowledgment that the law isn't designed to protect individual citizens, and a concession to the unchecked power of the police. **As an association of advocates, we demand respect for the due process rights guaranteed by the Constitution. We demand that public hearings to establish the propriety of any such legislation.** We demand revisions and amendments which clearly define and determine parameters within which those who are unlawfully charged, harassed, injured or even killed by police have the right to seek justice.

Not only is it time for you to Know Your Rights, it is time for you to **TAKE ACTION**. Lawmakers need to know that we do not support laws which strip our communities of lives and information. We do not support laws that destroy transparency and erode any faith that the community has in the police department's ability to lawfully govern their streets. Send your Representatives and Senators the attached letter and demand that your voice be heard!

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