

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



Who We Are

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan association of over forty community organizations and churches with members in every part of the state. We seek legislative changes in Maryland's correctional policies to support alternatives to incarceration, address inequities, and aid citizens returning from prison to lead productive lives, thus, strengthening families and communities. Individual supporters include judges, attorneys, corrections professionals, as well as returning citizens, victims, and service providers.

Mission

- To advocate for legislative reforms of Maryland's criminal justice system that emphasize rehabilitation and restorative justice over mass incarceration and punishment.
- To create opportunities for those committed to criminal justice reform to meet, share resources, and engage with each other around common purposes.
- To raise awareness and understanding, among citizens of Maryland, of mass incarceration and promote positive alternatives.

Work With Us

We are working together to address the problem of mass incarceration in Maryland in several ways. We invite you to join us to accomplish our goals:

- To fully support alternatives to incarceration where appropriate;
- To save taxpayer dollars and reallocate the savings to build safer communities;
- To strengthen Maryland communities by supporting families, helping people returning from jails and prisons lead productive lives, and preventing crime;
- To end inequities in our justice system.

How We Work Together

Overview: Each of us brings unique strengths and perspectives to this work. Our work is enhanced by learning from each other, building on one another's ideas, and sharing responsibility for the group's success.

Leadership: Leadership takes many forms within MAJR. Those who are in formal leadership roles are responsible for inspiring, supporting, listening, and leading in ways that allow others to participate at their best. Leadership focuses on bringing out the best in each person rather than being "in charge."

Decision Making: Rather than a majority rule approach, we seek a sense of unity about the best way forward for our group. Whenever possible, broad input should be sought for decisions that have broad impact. Recognizing that some decisions need to be made quickly, it is important that we empower those most involved or impacted by the decision to proceed—with support of the Steering Committee. To read our complete charter see: <http://www.ma4jr.org/our-charter/>

To support and participate in MAJR activities, go to <http://www.ma4jr.org/> and click on "Get Involved."

2017 Legislative Initiatives

At its general meeting on September 21, MAJR members gave approval to the following legislative initiatives for 2017. See our complete list of initiatives at:

<http://www.ma4jr.org/initiatives/>

Pretrial / Bail Reform. This bill seeks to reduce overuse of pretrial detention that currently causes adverse impact to even low-risk citizens if they are unable to pay even small bail amounts. Taking a comprehensive approach, the Pretrial–Justice Reinvestment (PJR) act would task the newly formed Justice Reinvestment Oversight Board (JROB) with study of detention center and bail data. The expected outcomes would include:

- design an efficient, data-driven system to reduce pretrial detention and save taxpayer funds
- adopt nondiscriminatory risk screening
- support state-assisted local pilot programs to follow best-practice and reduce pretrial detention
- expand the use of citations in appropriate cases
- direct earlier screening of citizen complaints and diversion by prosecutors.

For more detail see <http://www.ma4jr.org/pretrial-fact-sheet/>

MAJR members will be interested to learn that Maryland’s attorney general has raised questions about whether the state’s cash bail system is constitutional. See

<http://www.ma4jr.org/pretrial-justice/>

Solitary Confinement Initiative. MAJR will support legislation of the Justice and Safety Alliance.

Removing the Governor from the parole process for inmates with life sentences with the possibility of parole. MAJR will again support the legislation of the Restorative Justice Initiative.

Expungement Act. The Job Opportunities Task Force will draft proposed legislation.

Collateral Consequences. “Collateral consequences” refers to the implications of a guilty plea to specific charges, such as being barred from certain employment or housing options. MAJR has asked the Governor’s Collateral Consequences Workgroup to recommend the following:

- Notify all defendants of the consequences of a guilty plea, and
- Expand the “certificates of rehabilitation [COR]” created in the 2016 Justice Reinvestment Act, which would reassure employers, landlords, and educational institutions of the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

For more detail see <http://www.ma4jr.org/collateral-consequences/>