

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



MAJR Approves Legislative Initiatives for 2017

At its general meeting on September 21, MAJR members gave approval to the following legislative initiatives for 2017:

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.**

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/> and <http://www.ma4jr.org/certificate/>

Collateral Consequences Work Group Holds Second Meeting

On September 26, the Collateral Consequences workgroup held its second meeting, which was attended by MAJR Monitors Barbara Thomas and Adrian Bishop. Highlights included the following.

Representatives of the Maryland Data Analysis Center said there was no Maryland-specific data on employment and occupational licensing of persons with criminal records. They noted that national research suggests that after 4 years, the recidivism risk falls below general population’s risk of arrest. Conclusions are that recidivism declines with the age of the former prisoner and the length of time he or she is out of prison and free of new crime.

Speakers presented four recommendations:

1. Limit the consideration of certain criminal histories older than 7-10 years after release.
2. Use sealing or shielding instead of expungement of criminal history to counter the effects of collateral consequences.
3. Conduct data collection, reporting, and analysis from Maryland state licensing and certification boards as well as state agencies.
4. Maryland state agencies should disseminate more information and guidance to potential certification/license applicants and employment applicants.

Complete notes may be found at: <http://www.ma4jr.org/workgroup-0926/>

What Happened at the First Stakeholder's Meeting?

Since our last newsletter, the **Collateral Consequences** Workgroup has held an open meeting for stakeholders to provide input on their recommendations and an additional workgroup meeting. MAJR reporters attended both meetings and provided reports. MAJR will need to carefully consider the workgroup's recommendations as it decides on legislation worthy of support.

Stakeholders Advocate for Removing Barriers

Speakers representing **America Works**, which teaches skills to help returning citizens find work, recommended incentives for employers, such as wage subsidies. Juan Arvelo spoke on behalf of **Families Advocating Intelligent Registries** and recommended putting Tier One sex offenders on a non-public registry, with access only by law enforcement. He also advocated a Certificate of Rehabilitation to remove barriers to licenses, jobs, housing. Work group members felt this was not included in their mandate, and one observed that some Tier One offenses (such as sex trafficking by force, fraud or coercion) represented high-risk activities.

Speakers representing **Out for Justice** highlighted a variety of essential supports for re-entry, including: opportunities for entrepreneurship, treatment for trauma, housing (including children), legal services for parental rights, licenses, and building credit. Two returning citizens described their experiences.

For a summary of additional stakeholder input, see <http://www.ma4jr.org/workgroup-0915/>

What you can do!

Opportunity for Stakeholder Input!

The **Collateral Consequences** workgroup is planning another stakeholder meeting in which stakeholders, such as returning citizens and the people who help them find employment, can give input. Here are the dates:

- **Friday**, October 14, 1 – 3 pm location in the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park Museum, Founders Room, 1417 Thames Street, Baltimore, MD 21231.

If you would like to testify on the 14th, please contact Madison Getty at madison.getty@maryland.gov or 410-697-9308 no later than Wednesday, October 12.

How can you give effective input that will help the workgroup? Here are a few tips:

- State clearly what you believe the workgroup should recommend.
- Support your opinion with facts or your experience.
- Keep your remarks concise and very focused on what the workgroup should do.

Note that it's fine to identify yourself as a MAJR member, but **please do not say you are representing MAJR**. Recommendations from MAJR are developed by the Executive Committee based on careful consideration of members' feedback, focus groups, research, and input from allied organizations.

Public Workgroup Meetings

The workgroup plans two more meetings, open to the public. All will be in Annapolis, most likely in the Legislative Hearing Room:

- **Monday, October 31, 10am to 1pm**
- **Tuesday, November 15, 12 to 3pm**

Help Wanted!

In order to reach all legislators required to pass legislation, MAJR is making an effort to reach more potential members in western and southern Maryland and on the Eastern Shore. Anyone who can suggest local coordinators or sympathetic contacts in churches or civic organizations, or even individuals, to extend MAJR's network, please contact Rev. Marvin Silver at msilver@cacucc.org or Jerry McLauren at jerry@pfccoalition.org.

MAJR is a nonpartisan association of over thirty community organizations and churches with members in every part of the state, formed to support justice reinvestment. Individual supporters include judges, attorneys, corrections professionals, as well as returning citizens, victims, and service providers.

Help us by forwarding this newsletter to your community!

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