

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



MAJR General Meeting

Sunday, May 7 at 2:00 p.m.
Stony Run Friends Meeting
5116 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21210

Learn how we fared in Annapolis this year. Help us plan our strategy for the next legislative session.



Dear family & friends of Maryland — we need your help!

Unfortunately Senate Bill 983 — the bail industry bill — has passed the Maryland Senate. It passed on a close 26-19 vote. [How did your senator vote?](#)

We still have a chance to kill this bill. SB 983 may now go over to the House of Delegates. It currently sits in the rules committee where a determination will be made about whether the bill should be heard in the House Judiciary committee and the House floor.

The reason it is in the Rules committee is because Delegate Anderson withdrew HB 1215, the crossfile to SB 983, last week. Technically the bill should be dead given that the House bill has been withdrawn, but it is up to the Speaker of the House, Michael Busch, to determine whether this bill gets to come out of the Rules committee and into the House Judiciary committee.

Here is what you can do:

1. Call speaker Busch's office and demand that SB 983 be killed in the rules committee. This would effectively kill the bail bonds industry's bill.

Phone: 410-841-3800

Email: michael.busch@house.state.md.us

2. Call the members of the Legislative Black Caucus to demand that they tell the Speaker to kill SB 983 in the Rules Committee.

Phone: 410-841-3185

Email: black.caucus@house.state.md.us

SB 983 actually is a negative bill **supported by bail bondsmen** since it seeks to repeal the unanimous February 2017 ruling by Maryland's highest court that bail may be used only to ensure the court appearance of a person, but may not be used to keep someone in jail because of poverty.

By comparison, SB 879 and SB 880's risk assessment/pretrial service could reduce a much larger percentage of folks safely. It has been proven by evidence-based studies that one can safely release many low risk folks with appropriate reminders and supervision. For a complete explanation of the supported legislation see: <http://www.ma4jr.org/hb1157-pretrial-release-bail-reform/> and read our [Pretrial Issue Brief](#).

Citations in Lieu of Arrest

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) supports the [Citation Bill](#) — SB477/HB 408 as a valuable tool for law enforcement. With your help [HB 408](#) passed the House with overwhelming support — 122 to 16. As amended this version of the bill earned the support of the Maryland Police Chiefs & Sheriffs and was unopposed by the Maryland State's Attorneys Association.



HB 408 primarily adds simple drug possession (not distribution) to misdemeanors for which a police officer has discretion to issue a citation, provided there is no immediate health risk or public safety concern. Thus, an officer still might arrest rather than cite a defendant if he/she is driving under the influence, overdosing, or possessing a weapon. However, a normal traffic stop finding a bag of marijuana or unidentified pills on the console would not automatically result in an arrest.

Now the focus shifts to the Senate version: Senate Bill 477 introduced by Senator Kelley. Please contact your Senator and urge support for this vital bill. How to contact your Senator? Go to <http://mdelect.net/> and type in your street address.



Lifers Parole

The states of Maryland, California, and Oklahoma are the three remaining states that require Gubernatorial approval for parole release of persons sentenced to a parole-eligible sentence. Even after the Parole Commission makes an independent merit-based determination of parole suitability, the Governor's approval is still required.

Depoliticizing Maryland's Parole Board, [HB 723](#) permits parole of those who have served at least 25 years of a life sentence, who have a good record, and who pose no risk to public safety-- as most such individuals are elderly. With your support the House Bill passed with a [79 to 55 vote](#).

If the Senate approves this bill in the form passed by the House, Maryland prisons no longer will be required to operate nursing homes behind the walls, public safety would be preserved, and savings could better be used for treatment of younger, violent offenders. Please contact your Senator and urge him or her to support HB 723 as passed in the House!

Read about the Lifers issue at <http://www.ma4jr.org/parole-incentive-for-life/>

MAJR is a nonpartisan association of over forty 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!

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

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