

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



Dear family & friends of Maryland's lifers -- we need your help!

We are pleased to report that on Friday, the House Judiciary Committee took the first step towards passing HB 723, which will take the Governor out of the parole process for lifers!

The next step is for the bill to get a vote in the full House, which should happen Tuesday night. **PLEASE** help us make sure legislators know to vote FAVORABLY on HB 723 -- click on the link below and fill it out to send a message to your legislator. Please share this link far and wide if you support Maryland's lifers!

<http://bit.ly/2mORoNi>

Thank you!
Maryland Justice and Safety Alliance

MAJR Testifies in Annapolis

In February and March of this year MAJR has testified on several initiatives in meetings of the House Judiciary, Senate Judicial Proceedings, and other important committees in our legislature. Our major initiatives which we are pursuing with our Allied Organizations include:

Bills	Topic	PDF
HB1157/SB879 HB1390/SB880	Pretrial Release – Bail Reform	PDF
HB408/SB477	Citations in Lieu of Arrest	PDF
HB1233/SB984	Medical Parole	PDF
HB440/SB055	Employers of Ex-Offenders	PDF
HB723/SB694	Lifers Parole	PDF

Bills	Topic	PDF
HB1001/SB1015	Solitary Limitations	PDF
HB860/SB853	Equal Access to Food	PDF

In this newsletter we introduce several of our testimonies. You can see all the positions that MAJR has taken on our website at <http://www.ma4jr.org/testimony-2017/>



Pretrial Release – Bail Reform

HB 1157/ HB 1390

SB 879 / SB 880

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR – www.ma4jr.org) is a not-for-profit organization with more than 1,000 individual Marylanders and more than 40 churches and other organizations as members and supporters from every part of Maryland. For the following reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to give a favorable report to SB 879 and SB 880.

Six reasons and opportunities to change Maryland pretrial / bail policies for the better:

- US. Constitution standard and recent action by the Maryland Court of Appeals
- Foreseeable overcrowding and pretrial pilot /resource center for Maryland jails
- Taxpayer consequences of continuing current trends in pretrial detention
- Low-income individuals and their families suffer devastating impacts
- Public safety and validated risk assessments
- Other ways to reduce pretrial detention:
 1. Technical Violation of Parole - ensuring Justice Reinvestment savings
 2. Citations for simple possession
 3. Earlier screening of misdemeanors
 4. Earlier diversion of appropriate cases to community mental health, homeless, substance abuse treatment, veterans care, and mediation programs

We contact you again at a crucial point in working for pretrial justice legislation. Your state Senator needs to hear from you **as soon as possible**. How to contact your Senator? Go to <http://mdelect.net/> and type in your street address.

What's the problem?

MAJR is strongly supporting two bills, **SB 879 and SB 880**. However your **Senators may say they are inclined to vote for a very different bill** – SB 983.

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.

If SB 983 is brought up, please say 'We know bail bondsmen support this, but it is a bad bill for the community. Please support SB 879 and 880 instead.'

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

- to save officers' time,
- to reduce unnecessary arrest and detention, and
- to improve community relations.

At the same time, the Citations Bill preserves officers' discretion to arrest when necessary to ensure public safety, to confirm a suspect's identification, and to process other open warrants and more serious charges. This bill further expands officers' citations options as begun by SB 422 (2012) that permitted use for misdemeanors with maximum penalties of 90 days or less, and for marijuana possession.

The Governor's Office for Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) has tracked citations use since 2012 finding a surge in Maryland's three largest counties in the first years. But, after notoriety of the law faded and marijuana decriminalization passed, police use of citations dropped in all but one county: In Anne Arundel County, the effective use of citations has increased each year to the point that, in 2015, one of every three District Court criminal charges was filed by citation. See GOCCP 2016 report and Dist.Ct. statistics.

To see the complete testimony on this bill, click [here](#).

On March 6th HB408 was reported out of the House Judiciary Committee and will proceed to the full House for a vote. Please contact your Delegate and urge support for this vital bill. How to contact your Delegate? Go to <http://mdelect.net/> and type in your street address.

Employers of Ex-Offenders – Liability for Negligent Hiring or Inadequate Supervision – Immunity

Bill Numbers: HB440/SB055

Governor Larry Hogan announced on December 16, 2015 a multi-agency initiative, led by the Governor’s Office of Crime Control & Prevention, to conduct an extensive review of the legal and regulatory barriers that individuals with a criminal record face when re-entering the community after time in prison. This initiative was spearheaded by Judge Alexander Williams, Jr., head of the **Collateral Consequences Workgroup**.



In addition to criminal penalties that may be imposed at sentencing, there are many legal and regulatory penalties, sanctions, and restrictions—commonly known as **collateral consequences**—that are distinct from the direct consequences imposed as part of the court’s judgment at sentencing.

Submitting its final recommendations on December 31, 2016, the Workgroup emphasized that the State of Maryland encourage employers to assist our returning citizens gain steady and rewarding employment. Among its recommendations is:

- **Recommendation 8: Renew Maryland programming that protects private employers and encourages them to hire returning citizens.**
- Effective public safety strategies not only include the pursuit, prosecution, and punishment of criminals, but it also includes finding jobs for citizens who have served their time and are returning to our communities.
- Returning citizens who lack a clear path to gainful employment have higher chances for **recidivism**, and lean heavily on state resources.

The current legislation is an important step in providing the needed assurance to employers to take a limited risk in giving jobs to our returning citizens. We support this legislation and urge that this committee consider HB440/SB055 favorably.



Lifers Parole

Bill Numbers: HB723/SB694

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.

A number of persons have reached, or exceeded the sentencing limits of the judges who imposed their parole-eligible life terms or other lengthy sentences years ago. Despite the rehabilitative efforts made by these same prisoners, parole has become elusive in the State of Maryland.

The governor should not be put in a position that puts his reputation so directly on the line. The parole process is well understood, and by reaffirming that process this committee can assure a triple win: it will reassert the rule of law; it will relieve the governor of potential accusations; and it will give hope to many valuable citizens to return to productive civilian lives.

Now is the time for the Maryland General Assembly to remove the Governor from the parole process to prevent further distortion of the parole process. With merit-based re-entry, the Maryland Parole Commission would continue to be able to determine parole suitability.

We **support** this legislation and urge that this committee consider HB723/SB694 favorably.

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

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Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) Lobby Day

When: Tue, March 28

Where: Annapolis Legislature

Let us join together in Annapolis to urge support for legislative initiatives that seek to advance reform in criminal justice, economic justice, environmental justice, and racial justice.

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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