

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



MAJR General Meeting—1/24/18



Over 40 participants were hosted by **Living Classrooms**, 1100 E. Fayette St. in Baltimore. Diamonte Brown facilitated and kept us on schedule! Take a look at the minutes of this meeting here: <http://www.ma4jr.org/majr-24-jan-2018/>

Lea Green (**Maryland C.U.R.E.**) introduced Charles Chappell, nominating him to serve with MAJR's Executive Committee. Charles spoke briefly about his experience within DOC as an inmate administrator for "a multimillion dollar operation" (Maryland Correctional Enterprises) and eloquently described his difficulties finding similar work back in the community. By unanimous approval, Charles was approved for this position. Join us in welcoming Charles Chappell!



Lea Green offered an introduction to "Plan B" for lifers allowing them to take part in rehabilitation programs as was the case many years ago. This proposal met with serious approval especially on the part of returning citizens in the room. Phil Caroom, Lea Green, Vince Greco, Steve Steuer, and Jim Rose all presented briefings on current legislation. For an introduction to MAJR's initiatives see <http://www.ma4jr.org/initiatives-2018/> and for the status of current legislation see <http://www.ma4jr.org/legislation-2018/>

Before concluding, Phil Caroom highlighted an upcoming Legislative Breakfast and Lobby Day planned for March 7th. Both Governor Glendening and Governor Ehrlich will be invited to speak. An important Lobby Day organized by the Interfaith Action for Human Rights on solitary confinement will occur on February 6th: please register for this now at <http://www.interfaithactionhr.org/>

SURJ Identifies Priorities

Showing up for Racial Justice (SURJ) convened allied organizations to share their perspective on 2018 legislation in areas of interest. MAJR sent two reporters to listen and



hear their concerns.

Dayvon Love, spokesperson for **Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle (LBS)**, said the organization will work with legislators to:

- Uphold the Court of Appeals 2017 Rule Change for Maryland's Pre-Trial system, which prioritizes non-financial conditions for pre-trial release, e.g., pre-trial services.
- Oppose legislation that addresses crime and violence with incarceration and tougher penalties.
- Support legislation that invests in community-based anti-violence programs.
- Support marijuana legalization that requires tax revenues from sales to be invested in providing resources to the communities that have been hardest hit by the War on Drugs.

Speaking for **Out for Justice**, Nicole Hanson-Mundell said her organization's priorities include:

- Uphold the Court of Appeals 2017 Rule Change for Maryland's Pre-Trial system,
- Streamline the expungement process.
- Reopen the women's work release/pre-release unit.
- Provide access to Maryland medical assistance behind the walls.

Out for Justice also wants to take the politics out of parole and supports the Primary Caretaker Act, as well as bills to reform the overuse of solitary confinement.

Lydia Walther-Rodriguez and Mari Cruz spoke for **CASA**, which seeks amendments to the Maryland Dream Act that contains unnecessary restrictions for "Dreamers" who want to attend state universities or community colleges. They plan a lobby day on February 26.

The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, represented by Samuel Johnson, is focused on restoring funding for the Red Line. Funding for the red line was canceled by Governor Hogan.



Thanks to Rosalie Dance and Adrian Bishop for being there and preparing this report. Read the full report: <http://www.ma4jr.org/showing-up-for-racial-justice-1-20-2018/>

Steps in the Right Direction

Maryland Counties Leading the Way in Pretrial Services



The **Open Society Institute in Baltimore** released an important report on pretrial services in the Baltimore region. In their summary they note:

- As statewide efforts to reform the pretrial system finally gain steam, many Maryland counties have already taken steps in the right direction to introduce or expand pretrial release programs. The results of these local efforts are impressive, demonstrating that a statewide approach that places a priority on community-based pretrial services is effective at ensuring that people return to court while leading to better public safety outcomes and significant cost savings when compared to pretrial incarceration.

[Read the full report here.](#)



Impact of Changes to Pretrial Release Rules

The Maryland Judiciary just released a report assessing the success of the significant change in its rules regarding pretrial release.

Among its summary conclusions are:

- To complement the effects of the new Rule, enhanced pretrial services must be implemented in each county that does not yet have a pretrial services unit. The data indicates that the Rule is succeeding in ensuring that lower level offenders are not detained solely because they cannot afford bail. It also indicates that those that pose the most risk are being preventively detained. The more challenging cases are found in the middle of the spectrum where an effective county based pretrial system would ensure public safety while contemporaneously reducing pretrial jail populations. ...
- The Judiciary is collaborating with its justice partners to pilot pretrial programs in three of those jurisdictions and is in the first stages of investigating a statewide risk assessment tool. In addition, a one day conference with various criminal justice partners to further explore the nuts and bolts of developing and running a pretrial services program and how to develop and use a risk assessment tool will assist with implementing county plans. A delay in legislative action is requested to allow these pretrial opportunities to be explored.

Emphasis added. To read the complete report [click the link here.](#)

Unger v. Maryland: Four Years Later

On January 23, 2018, The University of Baltimore (UB) Law School hosted a symposium on "Unger v. Maryland Four Years Later: Implications for Criminal Justice Reform," co-sponsored by the University of Baltimore Juvenile Justice Project and the Maryland Restorative Justice



Institute. *Unger v. Maryland* is the 2012 decision by the Maryland Court of Appeals that ordered retrials for nearly 250 persons given life sentences in criminal trials during the 1970s and 1980s. To date, 182 persons have been released after three to four decades in prison. Only one person has been charged with any criminal act (a misdemeanor) since release. Key points emerging from the panel's discussion included:

- Strong support from social workers within the University of Maryland Law School, who developed re-entry plans to help "Ungers" succeed, were a key factor in the low recidivism rate.
- Scott Shellenberger, State's Attorney for Baltimore County, commented that bail reform is working (!). While he continues to be opposed to removing the Governor from the parole process, he expressed interest in California's approach, which requires the Governor to use the same criteria for parole as the Parole Commissioners use.

MAJR thanks Rosalie Dance, Adrian Bishop, Carolyn Hadley, and Bob Rhudy for attending the panel and submitting a report, which is available on our website at <http://www.ma4jr.org/unger-2018/>



MAJR Lobby Day

following our Legislative Breakfast Meeting.

Wednesday, March 7

10:30pm - 12:30pm

Learn How! Visit Legislative Offices



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.

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