

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



Death Penalty

The [Maryland Commission on Capital Punishment](#), ten years ago in 2008, studied our state's use of capital punishment and made findings that still should deter legislators from undoing their well-considered repeal of the law in 2013:

- Racial disparities existed in how the death penalty was applied with African-Americans being more than twice as likely to be selected;
- Geographic disparities existed in how the death penalty was applied—with Baltimore County 12 times more likely to seek this penalty than Baltimore City among other county-by-county disparities.
- Death penalty cases were approximated to be three times more costly to taxpayers than non-death penalty cases and took a greater toll on the survivors of murder victims.
- The stringent standards required by the U.S. Supreme Court and Maryland Courts resulted in a reversal rate of “eighty percent (80%) for the years 1995-2007” by appeals courts for Maryland death penalty convictions. Even with potential retrials, the penalty was tremendously uncertain and delayed.
- No persuasive evidence was found to confirm that the risk of execution is a deterrent to crimes.
- The unavailability of DNA evidence in some cases opened the "real possibility" of wrongly executing an innocent person. Notably, across the U.S. between 1987 and 2008, “for every 8.7 executions, there has been one exoneration.”
- The Commission, by strong majority vote, also rejected the proposal to limit capital punishment to cases in which the victim was a law enforcement officer.

See:
Maryland Commission on Capital Punishment, *Final Report to the General Assembly*, December 12, 2008 <http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/012000/012331/unrestricted/20100208e.pdf>

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, formed to support justice reinvestment. Individual supporters include judges, attorneys, corrections professionals, as well as returning citizens, victims, and service providers.