

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



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TO: Chair Bobby Zirkin and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Phil Caroom, MAJR Executive Committee

DATE: February 28, 2018

Pretrial supervision programs, with risk screening, have been shown a cost effective and safe alternative to jail for people awaiting trial who are not a threat to public safety or likely to fail to appear for their court date. Evidence-based programs can cut failures-to-appear by more than half. See [U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance sponsored study – Risk-Based Pretrial Release & Supervision Guidelines \(2015\).](#)

Especially in the 11 Maryland counties that currently lack pretrial supervision programs, some may have concerns that more defendants' pretrial release could put victims at risk. While risk-screening should minimize that possibility, SB 766 goes two steps further to address victim concerns:

- 1) It ensures that a victim can get notice of any pretrial supervision and conditions ordered; and
- 2) It ensures that a victim can communicate directly with the Court to report a violation of a "no contact" or similar condition, or to request modifications of such conditions.

While the fiscal analysis projects some costs for computer programming and pamphlet preparation to provide such victims' notices, legislators should take note that these expenses primarily are start-up costs and will drop by 75% after the first fiscal year. As to local costs, some counties have projected that they could implement the system without costs, although one (Montgomery Co.) projects that it could spend much more.

Taken together, Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) finds SB 766 to be a valuable improvement, bringing our state's pretrial supervision program into the 21st century and urges the Committee to give this bill a favorable report.

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NOTE: Phil Caroom submits this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform executive committee and not on behalf of the Maryland Judiciary.