

## MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

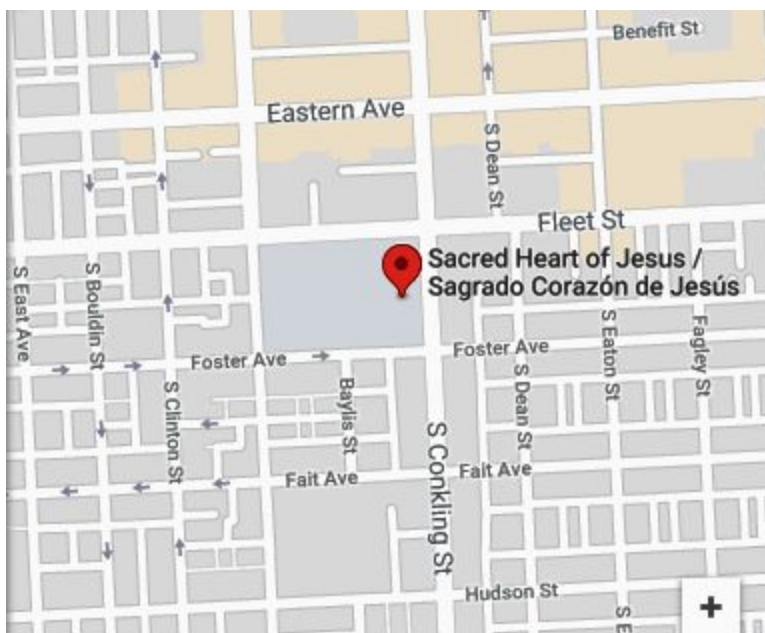
Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



### General Meeting January 4th

You are invited! MAJR has an **exciting agenda** ahead for the 2019 legislative session. It's going to be a busy year, and we need your help in organizing and forwarding our initiatives.

The Maryland legislature will begin its deliberations on January 9th. It's time to make our plans firm. MAJR will host a general planning session on **Friday, January 4th** at the **Sacred Heart of Jesus Church**, 600 South Conkling Street, Baltimore, MD 21224



6:00 - 7:00: Welcome and Potluck supper

7:00 - 9:00: Issues and Participation

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### Strong Schools Maryland

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform plans a special effort in the upcoming 2019 legislative season to partner with other groups, such as **Strong Schools Maryland** and the **ACLU**, to advocate for childhood education reform. In particular, we will support Strong Schools Maryland "Teams of 10," which will hold monthly meetings through April 2019 to write letters advocating for legislation, and participate in advocacy activities.



There is strong support already, but the outcome is not a sure thing. As our organizers say, "This kind of opportunity for our schools comes only once in a generation." If you might join (or lead) a "Team of 10" to advocate education reform with support from MAJR and Strong School Maryland, please [respond to this email](#) and let us know!

To learn more about Childhood Education Reform, and the School to Prison Pipeline, take a look at our issue brief at <https://www.ma4jr.org/strong-schools/>

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## Mental Health Screening and Services

On Friday, December 7, MAJR joined with the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI) to support a focus group on Pretrial Mental Health. The focus group came away with positive results. Along with MAJR and NAMI, participants in this invitation-only event included representatives of the Maryland Judiciary, the Maryland Correctional Administrators Association (MCAA), the Public Defender's Office, law enforcement representatives, state legislators, the Behavioral Health Administration of the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation, local Mental Health Agencies, the Maryland Association of Counties (MACO), and other non-profit groups.

A report of agreed findings and recommendations is now in the drafting stage by the focus group and should be ready for distribution by early January. Thanks to the several MAJR members who served as volunteer staff to make this work possible.

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## School-to-Prison Pipeline

The Governor's Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices met Monday December 10th to review their draft report. The discussion focused on the need to recommend action-able items that are best for children. The participants want the report to be intentional about the role of racism in the school-to-prison pipeline. They desire training about implicit bias as well as cultural competence. The group agreed that training should include all school staff, and that training includes coaching, mentoring, and monitoring.



The report will state that there is a strong need to monitor and evaluate program implementation and link it to student outcomes. The participants noted that outcomes need to be positive; not just a reduction in suspensions and expulsions. When evaluating restorative practices, both qualitative and quantitative research needs to be conducted and considered. While there was concern about "unfunded mandates" and a discussion about asking for new funding or re-purposing current funding, the group was in agreement that if more prevention is done at the front end then there will be less of a need for money at the

## Putting Mercy in Criminal Justice

The **Baltimore Washington Conference's** Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries (CJAMM) sponsored a day-long event on December 8th that included an ecumenical group of 55 people of faith and criminal justice advocates. While organized by the United Methodist Church **the workshop** and the entire movement is open to community-wide participants from many churches and other organizations.



The workshop was convened with two purposes in mind:

- To gain a broader understanding of the complexities involved with ministering to our brothers and sisters currently navigating the justice system.
- To come away with several areas of focus and specific recommendations for action for a newly formed Steering Committee in the coming year.

For further information see CJAMM's website <http://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/advocacy-action/criminaljustice-and-mercy-ministries/>

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## MAJR convened its general meeting in Forestville, Prince Georges County, on the 27th of November.

All three workgroups reported, highlighting initiatives that MAJR and its allied organizations will be forwarding in the next legislative session. **Expungement** and **certificates of rehabilitation** were the focus of the Backdoor workgroup. **Solitary confinement** and the **Governor's role in parole** decisions were highlighted by the Behind-the-Walls workgroup. And the Frontdoor workgroup forwarded a new pretrial **mental health screening** and services bill as well as changes to the **sentencing guidelines**.

To view the details of this meeting see <https://www.ma4jr.org/majr-27-nov-18/>

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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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