



Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Dear Delegate

Support HB0445/SB0671 - Criminal Procedure - Charging Procedures – Citations

As your constituent I am writing to ask your support for HB0445/SB0671. This bill expands the use of citations for simple possession of drugs to avoid arrest when these are unnecessary. Police officers still would have discretion to arrest, if necessary, for cases that involve overdoses, other threats to public safety, or known risks to abscond.

The bill has been endorsed by the Maryland Chiefs and Sheriff's Association. Nationally, other law enforcement organizations affirmatively support expanded citation use. In their 'Citation in Lieu of Arrest' report, the International Chiefs of Police note: 'As arrest numbers and prison populations have increased, ...the criminal justice system [needs] ways to increase system efficiency, decrease costs, build trust between law enforcement and the public, protect the rights of the accused, and maximize public safety.'

The expense of detaining low-risk individuals before trial is not the only issue. A hidden cost is the negative impact of pretrial detention on public safety. After as few as three days in detention, low-risk individuals are 39% more likely to commit another offense; after more than 30 days, the likelihood increases to 74%. Why? Within this period, many individuals will have lost their employment and their housing, and may have become estranged from family and other support networks outside the jail (Arnold Foundation, 2013). For more information see: <https://www.ma4jr.org/citations/>.

I would like to know if you will support this legislation. Or if you have issues and questions. Please let me know.

Sincerely,