

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



MAJR's MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION — 2021 Report Card

As Maryland legislators, citizens, and advocates all coped with pandemic safeguards, they nevertheless addressed challenges such as police oversight and criminal justice reform. Many bills that were important priorities for MAJR were passed, though we don't yet know if the Governor will veto some of them. MAJR members, read with pride:

1) **Overrides** of the Governor's 2020 vetoes:

- The Kirwan Commission/"Blueprint for Maryland's Future"([HB1300](#)) will offer resources for schools in the State's poorest schools and help end the "school-to-prison" pipeline with long-needed changes to disciplinary systems;
- A Women's Prerelease Facility ([SB0684](#)) will offer reentry resources to women nearer to their once and future homes;
- Two expungement bills ([HB0083](#) and [HB1336](#)) will prevent Courts from disclosing charges after they are dismissed, permit expungement of old marijuana possession offenses and minor burglaries, and create a Commission to study further "partial expungement" reform.

2) **Police reform** included bills to:

- Set higher standards for officers' use lethal force and accountability ([SB0071](#));
- Allow public disclosure of police misconduct records ([SB0178](#));
- Give civilians a role in police discipline for the first time ([HB0670](#));
- Restrict no-knock warrants ([SB0178](#));
- Mandate body cameras for all officers ([SB0071](#));
- Shift investigation and prosecution of police-involved fatalities to an independent unit in the Attorney General's office ([SB0600](#)) ; and
- Ban police departments from acquiring surplus military equipment ([SB0600](#)).

3) **"Front Door" bills to reduce unnecessary arrests or incarceration** included:

- Citations in lieu of arrest ([SB0671](#)) for simple drug possession and minor misdemeanors;
- Pretrial supervision without fees ([HB0126](#)) across the State;
- Better funding for "mobile crisis teams" ([SB0286](#)) to respond to mental health problems in lieu of police;
- Steps to prospectively reduce exposure of juveniles to adult life sentences ([SB0494](#)) and to study more juvenile reforms ([HB1187](#)).

4) **"Behind the Walls" bills to improve prison outcomes** included:

- Correctional education milestone incentives ([HB0089](#));
- Retroactive review of juvenile sentences to adult prison terms after 20 years ([SB0494](#));
- Removal of the Governor's veto of parole for life sentences ([SB0202](#)).

5) **"Back Door" legislation to assist Marylanders released from prison.** The Partial Expungement Commission created in 2020 ([SB0874](#)) was renewed. MAJR continues to pursue the Maryland Division of Corrections' promise to create a statewide "Reentry Council," which we hope will take effect as the pandemic ebbs.

In summary, a record number of seventeen MAJR-prioritized bills passed, despite the pandemic! We owe special thanks to all MAJR supporters for your prolific contacts with your legislators! You took advantage of our new approach to lobbying and sent over 6000 emails to your senators and delegates. We couldn't do this without you!