

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



Advocating for MAJR in Annapolis Legislator's Offices

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Legislators and staff tell us that in-person visits from constituents are the most influential way to communicate with the Maryland General Assembly

The two “chambers” of the Maryland General Assembly

The **House of Delegates** is led by
Speaker Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk

The **Senate** is led by
President Bill Ferguson.



Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committee chairs



Senator Will Smith

and



Delegate Sandy Bartlett

will co-sponsor MAJR's number one priority bill this legislative season!

OUTLINE of Office Visits

- Outside the office practice saying the name of the people you will be visiting e.g. “Delegate Bartlett” or “Senator Smith”.
- Inside the office, introduce your group to the staffer.
- Ask, by name, if the legislator or their chief of staff would be available for a short visit.
- If you get to speak to the legislator or chief of staff, then repeat your introduction.
- Offer the booklet of MAJR priorities, with a brief description.
- Give a short description of one or two priority bills.
- Ask whether they think they can support either or both of these bills.

Sample Introduction:

Hello, we are with the Maryland Alliance of Justice Reform.

MAJR is an all-volunteer, non-partisan group of Maryland voters working toward just policies in the criminal justice system.

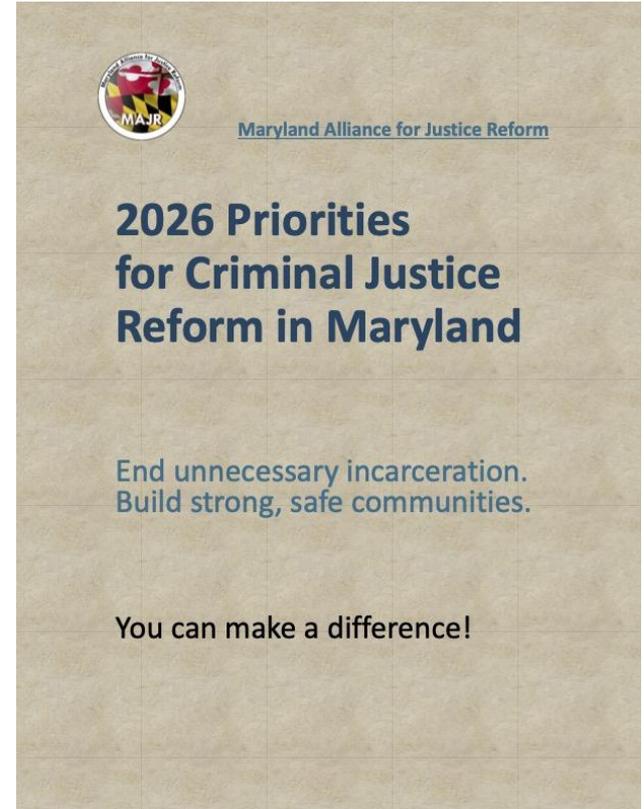
We support policies that reduce excess incarceration, increase access to alternatives, and reduce repeat offenses to make our communities safer.

Optional: A comment to connect to the legislator.

- I am a resident of your district / live in your county.
- We particularly wanted to talk to you because you serve on the Judiciary committee.

Example: What to say when offering the booklets

- This booklet contains MAJR's top priorities for the 2026 legislative session.
- Each priority has a QR code linking to our website where more information is available.
- There is also information about how to contact MAJR if you would like us to provide you with answers to particular questions or provide support.



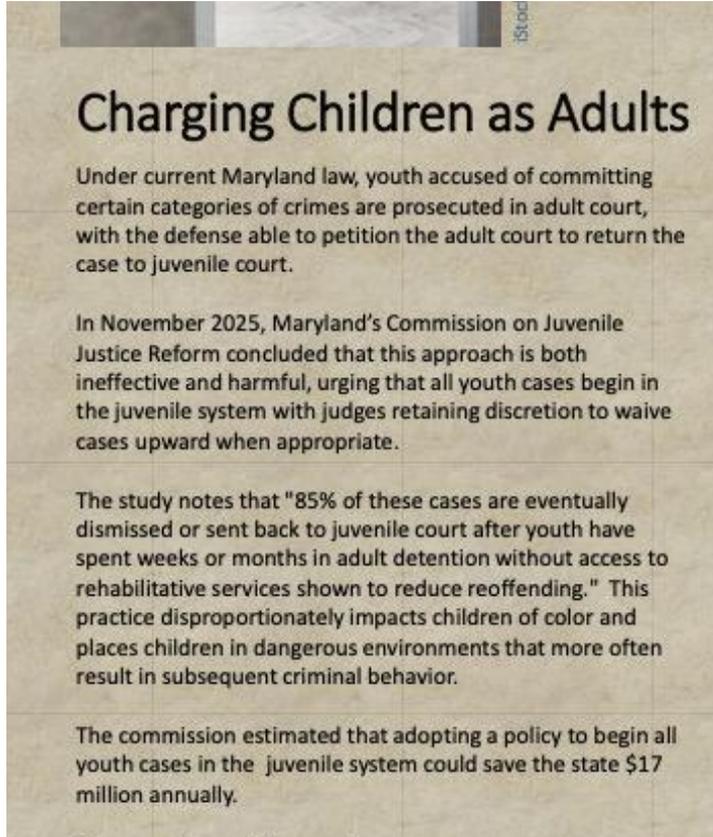
Creating your 30 second “elevator pitch”

Legislators do not have much time. So you should practice giving a short, but convincing speech to gain their interest in support.

These are called “elevator pitches”, because you could use this pitch if you found yourself riding an elevator with an influential person.

They are most convincing if you choose to speak about the parts that matter most to you.

Bill to reduce automatic charging of juveniles as adults:



Sample Elevator Pitch:

Our top priority is a bill to drastically reduce automatic charging of juveniles in adult court without a prior hearing.

- 85% of such automatic-adult-charge cases get dismissed or sent back to juvenile court.
- The current process is **slower**, resulting in kids dropping out of school.
- The current process is more **expensive** - making the change could save Maryland 17-18 million dollars per year!

Racial Disparities Study bill

Racial Disparities in Maryland's Criminal Justice System

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services' Division of Correction reports that out of the 17,586 incarcerated individuals in Maryland as of January 1, 2025, Black individuals comprise approximately 12,675, or 72%, of that total. [This data shows](#) that Black individuals are more than twice as likely to be incarcerated in Maryland compared to their proportion of the State's population (29%) and are more than five times as likely to be incarcerated compared to white individuals.

The Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy recommends the Maryland General Assembly fund a comprehensive study focusing on data regarding arrest, pretrial detention, and prosecution charging decisions.

By comparison, a [July 2020 Wisconsin report](#) found Blacks' rate of incarceration on violations of probation especially disproportionate; a prior local Wisconsin study found that white defendants were 74% more likely to receive a plea agreement without incarceration than Black defendants.

From such a study Maryland could identify our trouble points and devise policies to eliminate sources of racial discrimination in our systems.

Sample Elevator Pitch:

MAJR's second priority this year is a bill that will study racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

As recently as July 2018, more than 70 percent of Maryland's prison population was black, compared to 31 percent of the state population.

A 2019 study found that incarceration rates of black adults with long sentences were higher in Maryland than any other state.

Closing the office visit

Thank the person for their time.

When you leave the office make notes:

- To whom did you speak.
- Was any information or follow-up was requested.
- Was support indicated for some bill?
- Did they want MAJR to know about something else?

Group Activity:

Find the group you will be making office visits with.

- Take turns practicing your introduction
- Think about what matters most to you for MAJR's number 1 and number 2 priority bills.
- Personalize your elevator pitch and practice it on someone else in your group.