



OFFICE OF
THE STATE'S ATTORNEY
FOR DORCHESTER COUNTY

WILLIAM H. JONES
STATE'S ATTORNEY

MOLLY W. FOX
DEPUTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

BILL: House Bill 502-Office of the State's Attorney—Collection and Publication of Prosecutorial Information

SPONSOR: Delegate Crutchfield

HEARING DATE: February 12, 2021

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

CONTACT: William H. Jones, State's Attorney

POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

The Office of the State's Attorney for Dorchester County opposes House Bill 502. Several reasons provide the basis for this position. This Office estimates a cost of approximately \$140,000 annually to fulfill the obligations imposed by this proposed legislation. While that number may not seem significant, this small office recently submitted a proposed budget of \$840,000. As such, the anticipated required increase is substantial and unlikely to be funded locally in what is already an economically disadvantaged area. In terms of transparency, much of the data to be captured by this bill is already found in certain locations. Requiring the 24 state's attorneys to comply with these proposed requirements would be particularly onerous and duplicative.

This Office, and I suspect the other state's attorney's offices as well, approaches each and every case the same...with a goal of attempting to determine what is fair, based on the facts of that case. Date collection as is anticipated here would unquestionably affect decision making in a manner yielding inequitable results. Without question, prosecutors mindful of statistics and appearances, will find themselves, perhaps subconsciously, making decisions based on numbers...and not the facts of cases. Our justice system will not provide fair results when such things occur. This Office is directly accountable to the voters. If we are not doing our jobs properly, elections provide the remedy.

The Office of the State's Attorney for Dorchester County respectfully requests that the committee return an **unfavorable** report to **House Bill 502**.