

Feb 4, 2024

Greetings President Senator Will Smith and the Judicial Committee,

I, Nasyr Mathis-Chambers, support Senate Bill 36. I am a freshman at St. Mary's College of Maryland and a member of several campus organizations, one of which includes a sitting senator of the Student Government Association. I have also started an internship for Social Justice and Civic Engagement with Helping Ourselves to Transform under the leadership of Dr. Carmen Johnson.

Imagine a place where no life is lost unnecessarily behind bars. The Maryland Deaths in Custody Oversight Board, established by Senate Bill 36, would be a decisive step towards this reality. As a relative to individuals impacted by the Maryland correctional system, I urge you to pass this bill, not just for our future but for the future of incarcerated individuals.

As a young leader preparing myself for the road of politics, I understand the crisis of in-custody deaths requires immediate action. This Oversight Board will spotlight these tragedies to ensure accountability and prevent future incidents. It will enhance better medical and mental health services with preventive measures and medication management, aiming to prevent deaths. Prisons should facilitate reflection, not be places of torture or end of life. We as Marylanders must be committed to upholding the fundamental rights of the incarcerated by valuing their lives.

This isn't just about statistics; it's about real people. I've seen the scars, both physical and emotional, left by the system in our community. Let's break the cycle. This oversight board can be a beacon of hope for those inside and families like mine seeking justice and change by making SB36 a law. We want Maryland to continue to be a place of dignity and safety for all.

Thank you for your time on this matter. I pray that this bill will be voted on and passed into law.

Nasyr Mathis-Chambers