



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

HB 531 Correctional Services

- Parole Supervision Fees and Drug and Alcohol Abuse Test Payment – Repeal

Judiciary Committee, March 7, 2024

FAVORABLE

by Jessica Friedman, MD, MPH for MDDCSAM

On behalf of the Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine, I am writing to support Senate Bill 728, which eliminates fees for provision of parole supervision and drug and alcohol testing for individuals under supervision of the Division of Parole and Probation.

People on parole and probation are much more likely to have low incomes or be unemployed than people not on parole and probation.¹ The reasons for this are numerous and include both social and structural factors that existed prior to incarceration or community supervision as well as the challenges that people experience when trying to find and keep employment while under community supervision. Ultimately, fees for parole supervision and drug and alcohol testing are regressive and effectively create a system in which people are punished simply for being poor.

Many individuals on parole and probation would benefit from intensive, evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders. However, the time required to engage in effective treatment can conflict with the need to earn money to pay fees associated with community supervision. This creates a perverse choice in which individuals must choose between engaging in the treatment that would enable their rehabilitation or working so that they can avoid incarceration. **These fees are an unnecessary barrier to substance use disorder treatment and recovery.**

Moreover, if people are unable to pay a fee, they can be incarcerated. This is despite any progress they may have made in re-entering the community, including seeking treatment for their substance use disorder. For all illnesses, but especially substance use disorders, **interruptions in care increase the chance of relapse**, leading to increased risk of death and disability due to substance use.

Fees for supervision of parole and probation and drug and alcohol testing are regressive, unjust and hinder recovery from substance use disorders. We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 728.

1. Finkel, Mark. “New data: low incomes - but high fees - for people on probation.”

https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/04/09/probation_income/ S