



Maryland State's Attorneys' Association

3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 185

Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

410-203-9881

FAX 410-203-9891

Rich Gibson
President

Steven I. Kroll
Coordinator

DATE: February 20, 2025

BILL NUMBER: HB 994

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) supports House Bill 994 and urges this Committee to issue a favorable report.

In Maryland, an individual – as well as their accomplices and co-conspirators – is guilty of murder in the first degree if someone is killed during the course of their commission of certain enumerated felonies, regardless of that individual's intent to kill. This provision, colloquially known as "felony murder," is designed to deter individuals from engaging in inherently dangerous felony offenses – crimes like arson or armed robbery – by holding them accountable for what the law establishes as a reasonably foreseeable consequence.

For this provision to have any meaningful deterrent effect, however, it must be widely known by Marylanders. Although ignorance of the law is no excuse, we must strive as a legal community to ensure the rules are understood by all. HB 994 requires the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to develop and implement a curriculum that instructs middle school students of the consequences of a conviction for felony murder.¹ Education on this and other aspects of our criminal legal system will inure to the benefit of all Marylanders, as students will better understand and appreciate our system of adjudication and the protection the law affords.

¹ This Committee is scheduled to consider HB 993 as well – HB 993 is functionally identical to HB 994, except that it applies to Maryland's counties instead of Baltimore City. Both bills are supported by MSAA.