

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Beatris O'Connor. I am a Montgomery County resident, a former long-time business owner, and today I am here as someone whose family was deeply harmed by a system that lacks basic safeguards.

For nearly two years, my fiancé's ex repeatedly made false sworn statements to District Court Commissioners. Each time, a warrant was automatically issued—without corroborating evidence or meaningful review. Because a warrant alone is enough to trigger a parole violation, my fiancé's parole was violated the moment those warrants were issued, even though the allegations were later dismissed. As a result, he was incarcerated twice—first for three months, then again for six months—for charges that were ultimately found to be fabricated and baseless.

Seven criminal charges were filed. Every single one was nolle prossed by the State's Attorney after evidence directly contradicted the claims. Yet despite that outcome, the consequences to his freedom had already occurred. There is no remedy for time wrongfully taken. This same individual has made approximately 20 fabricated civil complaints, all resulting in warrants or sheriff service. Not once was she flagged. Not once was accountability applied.

This is not an isolated problem. Studies and court data consistently show that civil complaints are especially vulnerable to misuse, particularly in high-conflict personal relationships. A significant portion are later dismissed or found to be unfounded—yet arrests and parole consequences still occur first, because Maryland currently allows warrants to issue based solely on sworn statements, without evidentiary checks.

Our family has spent tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees defending against allegations that never should have progressed. But the financial burden pales in comparison to the emotional toll—the fear, instability, and loss of trust in a system meant to protect, not punish, innocent people.

My fiancé committed a non-violent bank offenses in 2010. He served his time and rebuilt his life as a contributing member of society. But under the current system, his parole status makes him uniquely vulnerable. One false statement—without proof—can override due process and put him back in jail.

That is not justice. That is punishment without conviction.

HB0336 does not eliminate civil complaints. It introduces accountability and common-sense safeguards so sworn statements cannot be weaponized. It restores the fundamental principle that liberty should not be taken without proof.

What happened to my family should not be possible in Maryland.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB0336.