

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Working together for a criminal justice system that better serves our communities



To: Chair Sandy Bartlett and Judiciary Committee members February 3, 2026
From: Bill Carlson and Jenny Zito, MAJR Executive Committee
Subject: **FAVORABLE - HB 336 - District Court Commissioners and False Statements**

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR - www.ma4jr.org) supports HB 336 which would prohibit District Court Commissioners from issuing arrest orders unless the application is from a police officer or States Attorney. This would replace the current system in which the District Court Commissioners can issue arrest warrants based on a statement of charges by anyone.

As the legislature has heard in testimonies in previous years, the existing system has caused many people to be arrested as a result of unjustified accusations. This can create substantial disruption in their lives, and lasting negative impacts on their families and reputation. The current system has allowed noncriminal situations involving irritated neighbors, troubled relationships, and discordant divorces or custody disputes to quickly escalate, leading to the arrest of people who are not guilty of breaking any law. See e.g., this testimony: [Thursday, January 23, 2025 Maryland House Of Delegates ATTN](#) in which a man used protective orders and accusations of child abuse against his ex-wives.

Your committee has received unfavorable testimony from some groups that serve abused individuals. They do not want to shut down a policy that allows an abused person to have their abusers quickly locked up. However, there are other avenues for stopping abusers through the police ([Section 2-204 \(2024\)](#)). Although a civil domestic violence protection order is not always sufficient to deter the most enraged domestic violence offenders from renewed abuse / threats / injuries, the police are required to arrest an accused abuser if there is the potential for violence. If the committee concludes that the current system plays an important role in domestic violence cases, MAJR would suggest a friendly amendment allowing victims of domestic violence to go to the District Court Commissioner to request an arrest warrant. Such an amendment could use the same standard as Section 2-204.

The second part of the bill concerns raising the penalties for false accusations. MAJR believes this is unnecessary and may discourage victims of domestic violence from reporting their abusers. Even the current penalties for false accusations are rarely employed since they are difficult to prove. MAJR suggests a friendly amendment that the increased penalties portion of the bill be removed.

MAJR is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible, evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. We urge the committee to give HB 0336 a favorable report.

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