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Bill Number: HB 1030

Position: Favorable

MSAA supports House Bill 1030, which clarifies and modestly expands the investigatory authority of the Office of the State Prosecutor to include certain criminal threats directed at judges and judges-elect, while preserving the important role of local State's Attorneys' Offices through an initial review process.

House Bill 1030 appropriately adds a narrowly tailored category of offenses that may be investigated by the State Prosecutor, following an opportunity for review by the local State's Attorney.

This change addresses a gap in Maryland law. Threats against judges and judges-elect strike at the heart of the judicial system and pose a direct risk not only to individual officials, but to the integrity of the courts themselves. When such threats occur, they may raise concerns that extend beyond county lines or implicate broader public confidence in the administration of justice. In those circumstances, the Office of the State Prosecutor is uniquely positioned to provide impartial, statewide involvement.

Importantly, House Bill 1030 does not displace local prosecutorial authority. By requiring that the local State's Attorney's Office be afforded the opportunity to review the matter before the State Prosecutor proceeds, the bill preserves local discretion, respects existing jurisdictional boundaries, and prevents unnecessary duplication of effort. This law also assists with conflicts of interest in Maryland State's Attorneys' Offices which arise when a judge becomes a victim in his/her own local jurisdiction.

The proposed amendment is also fully consistent with the existing structure of the statutes. Adding judicial threats fits squarely within this framework, as these offenses similarly implicate public trust and the proper functioning of government institutions.

For these reasons, HB 1030 represents a careful and balanced update to Maryland law. MSAA supports a favorable report for HB 1030.