



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE CITY

HB 0336 Support

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett
Chair, Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of HB 336 – Criminal Procedure – District Court Commissioners and False Statements

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support in favor of HB336, which aims to amend certain provisions concerning Criminal Procedure – District Court Commissioners and False Statements within the state of Maryland. As Baltimore City State's Attorney, I believe that this bill is crucial in enhancing the integrity of our legal system and safeguarding the rights of individuals.

HB336 proposes several important changes, the most significant being the prohibition of District Court Commissioners from issuing arrest warrants to individuals other than police officers or State's Attorneys. This measure ensures that only authorized personnel with proper training and legal understanding can initiate the arrest process, thereby reduce the likelihood of wrongful arrests and protect individuals from potential abuses of power.

Additionally, the bill seeks to amend penalties for making false statements or reports to governmental officials regarding criminal activities or public safety concerns by increasing the maximum imprisonment term from 6 months to 1 year. The legislation aims to deter individuals from fabricating information that could lead to unnecessary investigations or legal actions that cost innocent people excessive money, time, freedom and happiness.

Furthermore, House Bill 336 reinforces the responsibilities of District Court commissioners in upholding constitutional rights, determining probable cause and ensuring due process for all individuals brought before them. These provisions underscore the importance of fair and impartial judicial proceedings, thereby promoting public trust and confidence in our legal system.



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As we speak, the current system is being taken advantage of, and citizens are being falsely accused and detained without any evidence ever being presented. This cannot, and should not, continue to be the law of this State.

Based on the hard work of this committee's criminal sub-committee during last year's session, we understand that there are areas of concern that were presented and addressed by my office and that of the sponsor, which we are still in agreement with. We realize that domestic violence victims need the Court Commissioner for potential relief from their alleged abusers. For any CRU case, our suggestion is that we follow the guidance of current law under § 2-608 of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings— Charging Documents Against Law Enforcement Officers, whereas statement of charges filed in District Court against a law enforcement officer, emergency services personnel or an educator who allegedly commits the offense during the course of executing their duties, be forwarded to the local State's Attorney's Office after being filed in the District Court.

Unlike this statute, which has no time limit or recommendation, we would ask that for the purposes of this bill, that the State's Attorney would have a 72-hour window to review the case upon receiving it from the court commissioner, to make the recommendation on whether to proceed, and on whether a summons or a warrant should be issued, before sending it back to the court commissioner. And while this would certainly put a strain on the offices of State's Attorneys from across the state, I feel this would be the best and most prudent way of addressing this current situation in a fair and equitable manner.

In conclusion, I urge you to support House Bill 336. By enacting these proposed reforms, we can strengthen the trust in the judicial process and law enforcement, protect the rights of Maryland residents, and uphold the principles of fairness and accountability within our legal framework.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter. I look forward to a positive resolution on this critically important bill.

Yours in service,

Ivan J. Bates

Ivan J. Bates
State's Attorney for Baltimore City