

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D
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Baltimore City

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair
Joint Committee on Ending
Homelessness

Chair
Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Support SB 679 – Public Safety – Pretrial Services Program Grant Fund –
Extension and Program Requirements**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Committee,

As amended, SB 679 seeks to extend the Pretrial Services Program Grant Fund for an additional 5 years and prohibit a pretrial services program that receives grant funding from charging fees to defendants who participate in the program.

The Pretrial Services Program Grant Fund was established in 2018 with the passage of House Bill 447. The Fund is administered by the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention and its purpose is to “assist counties in the development, implementation, and improvement of pretrial services programs that reduce the size and cost of pretrial detention populations on the county level, reduce recidivism, and improve public safety outcomes, specifically the safety of victims and witnesses.”

These pretrial services are essential components of changing outcomes for individuals within our criminal justice system. However, we know that fines and fees imposed on incarcerated individuals are contributing to high rates of poverty and put the overwhelming majority of these already vulnerable people into debt well beyond their release. This only serves to establish additional barriers to successful reentry and their ability to attain educational opportunities and employment.

The amendment I am putting forward specifically states that, “A pretrial services program that receives a grant under this subtitle may not charge a fee to any defendant for participation in the program.” Simply put, a defendant should not be required to pay a county for services associated with a program that is funded by a State grant.

Thank you and I respectfully ask for your favorable report.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary L. Washington".

Mary L. Washington, PhD