



Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition

**Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee
HB 36 : Juvenile Proceedings - Fines, Fees, and Costs
Position: Favorable**

January 16, 2020

The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Room 101, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, House Judiciary Committee

Honorable Chair Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances financial justice and economic inclusion for Maryland consumers through research, education, direct service, and advocacy. Our 8,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

We are writing today in support of bill HB 36.

Through our organizational work, we witness the impact that fines and fees have on low-income families who are already in financial distress. Many families go into debt trying to pay these costs or must make hard financial choices between paying for necessities and paying court costs and fees.

As our report, *No Exit: How Maryland's Debt Collection Practices Deepen Poverty & Widen the Racial Wealth Gap*, details those who can afford to pay a fine, do not go to jail, while those who cannot afford to pay remain in jail. This practice criminalizes poverty by imprisoning individuals who do not have the means to pay their way out of jail.¹

For a low-income child, the introduction into the criminal justice system can have life altering implications that can make them ineligible for federal financial aid and some college scholarships, internships, and future employment opportunities. We strongly support HB 36 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

¹ http://www.marylandconsumers.org/penn_station/folders/about/annual_report/No_Exit_Report.pdf