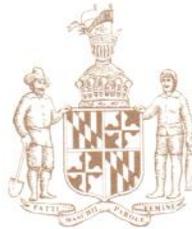


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The Maryland House of Delegates

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 830 – Criminal Law – Organized Retail Theft

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of **House Bill 830 – Criminal Law – Organized Retail Theft**.

Organized retail crime in Maryland has increased in recent years. The crime rings often operate in several counties, and the fact that more than one jurisdiction is involved can complicate bringing perpetrators to justice. House Bill 830 seeks to make it easier to prosecute crime rings that target widespread victims and establishments.

First, House Bill 830 defines organized retail theft as the commission, either alone or with one or more other persons, of a series of thefts of retail merchandise from one or more retail merchants with the intent to return the merchandise to the merchant for value or resell, trade, or barter the merchandise for value.

Second, the legislation stipulates that multiple thefts committed by the same person in multiple counties under one scheme or continuing course of conduct may be aggregated and prosecuted in any county in which any one of the thefts occurred.

Third, the bill lowers from four to three the number of prior theft convictions required in order to be subject to increased penalties. If a police officer has probable cause to believe that someone with three or more theft convictions has committed organized retail theft, the officer may make a warrantless arrest.

Finally, House Bill 830 requires that if a court finds that an individual committed organized retail theft, the finding becomes a part of the court record for the purposes of reporting to the Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository.

This legislation aims to provide our justice system with the ability to allow multiple thefts committed by the same person in multiple counties under one criminal scheme or continuing course of conduct to be combined and prosecuted as part of an overall scheme in any county in which any one of the thefts occurred.

I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 830.