



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

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February 3, 2020

Maryland House of Delegates
House Ways & Means Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of HB124

Honorable Delegates,

As the Sheriff of Anne Arundel County, I am writing in support House Bill 124 (HB124), the Maryland Income Tax Refunds – Anne Arundel County - Warrant Intercept Program. The Sheriff's Office houses and services warrants generated by the police department, District Court, and Circuit Court. There has been a continual need to find safe and effective ways to serve warrants in a manner that protects the lives of officers and citizens, and, is compassionate and considerate to the daily struggles of citizens. I believe the Warrant Intercept Program achieves this purpose. The program withholds a tax refund from a person with an outstanding warrant, notifies them of the warrant, and creates an opportunity for that person to clear the warrant on their terms and time schedule. The process is highly effective, safe for officers and citizens, and provides for proper planning by a wanted person to have a warrant served, while mitigating any further impact on his or her life.

There are currently more than 12,000 open warrants in Anne Arundel County and the Warrant Intercept Program has become an important part of our warrant maintenance effort. I support legislation to continue the program, as it will also become part of my overall warrant reduction strategy during the next few years. The Sheriff's Office has 18 deputies working various hours to service the county warrant load. Annually, those deputies serve more than 2500 outstanding warrants. The warrant intercept program averages a warrant clearance of just over 200 warrants annually, which represents significant percentage of the total number of warrants served by the Sheriff's Office. The Warrant Intercept Program amounts to having an additional deputy, working full time for a year, to serve and clear the average number of warrants cleared through the program; however, without negative law enforcement-to-citizen interaction.

Warrants cleared through the Warrant Intercept Program also means that deputies less often have to go into the dangerous scenarios created by warrant service on our roadways, in communities, and at places of business. Warrant service encounters can be embarrassing for

the involved person when arrested around family, friends, or coworkers. Regardless of the original offense leading to a warrant, unless recalled, continued attempts will be made to serve the warrant. The program motivates wanted persons to submit themselves for warrant service with an approach that creates a safer environment for law enforcement and the affected citizen.

For the person with an outstanding warrant, the economic impact of withholding a tax return is real, but when anticipated, very temporary. To the contrary, the economic impact of being arrested unexpectedly for an outstanding warrant can have long-term economic effects on citizens. For example, an individual who is arrested without notice at their place of employment, could potentially lose their job, or at a minimum, time off work. If the warrant offense lands them in jail, due to the setting of a bond amount for the person's release from custody, the loss of wages could be very significant. The setting of a bond will only increase the amount of money the arrested person will have to pay out. If someone is arrested for an outstanding warrant during a traffic stop in Anne Arundel County, their car could be impounded thus causing them additional loss through towing and storage fees. The economic impact of an unanticipated arrest can be devastating and the Warrant Intercept Program can help reduce such losses.

The Warrant Intercept Program has been an important tool to get warrants served, but gives a degree of control to the person with the warrant. In fact, I believe this program provides a benefit to the person with an outstanding warrant. As I explained the potential long-term economic impact, this program allows an individual to plan for potential work outages, contact legal counsel in advance, and mitigate family-related issues through advance notice of an outstanding warrant. The outstanding warrants list is updated daily and once a wanted person is processed for their warrant, the Comptroller's Office is updated to allow for immediate release of withheld tax refunds.

The Anne Arundel County Sheriff's Office and the Office of the Comptroller have worked together for several years to effectively serve warrants without the dangers of normal warrant service. This program offers an alternative to the traditional law enforcement approach to service of warrants. I fully support the Maryland Income Tax - Anne Arundel County - Warrant Intercept Program legislation and encourage you to support HB124.

Respectfully,

Jim Fredericks
Sheriff – Anne Arundel County