



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: February 3, 2021

RE: SB229 Public Safety – Pretrial Services Program Grant
Fund – Extension and Program Requirements

The MLLC supports SB229 Public Safety – Pretrial Services Program Grant Fund – Extension and Program Requirements.

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB229.

Pretrial services programs perform two crucial functions in the effective administration of criminal justice: gather and present information about newly arrested defendants and about available release options, while also supervising and monitoring the defendants release from custody during the pretrial period. When both functions are performed well, jurisdictions can minimize unnecessary pretrial detention, increase public safety, and lessen discrimination between rich and poor in the pretrial process.

It is well known that race, and ethnicity can impact who is detained pretrial. Latinos are disproportionately represented among pretrial detainees, and in large urban areas, Black felony defendants are over 25% more likely than white defendants to be held pretrial. According to the [Prison Policy Initiative](#), as of 2002 (the last time the government collected this data nationally), about 29% of people in local jails were not convicted, meaning they were imprisoned while awaiting trial or another hearing. Nearly 7 in 10 of these detainees were people of color, with Black (43%) and Latino (19.6%) defendants overrepresented compared to their share of the total U.S. population. One of the main reasons why minorities continue to be affected by this is the fact that most cannot afford to pay the fees imposed by the pretrial service program.

SB229 prohibits pretrial services programs that receive certain grants from charging a fee to a defendant for participating in such program. This would apply a more fair and equal use of our justice system and remove discriminatory, price tag barriers against individuals who cannot pay the associated fees.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on SB229.