



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Shared Voices for Liberal Religious Values in Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 671- Criminal Procedure - Charging Procedures and Documents – Citation

To: Senator Will Smith, Jr and the members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Karen Clark, Criminal Justice Task Force Chair,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Date: February 25, 2021

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland asks you to support SB 671. Studies have shown that when low-risk offenders are kept behind bars their rate of recidivism increases--even with a very short sentence. Having police officers trained to use citations in lieu of arrests for minor non-violent offences, diverts the offender from getting charged and being taken to jail. Being jailed, even for a minor offence, can have a very damaging impact on the offender while they await a hearing date after being charged. While waiting--even for just a short period of time--one's job security may be impacted or even terminated and family or other relationships can be disrupted. These offences usually carry a short-term sentence of 3 months or less but with a citation, an arrest may occur or a fine may be charged, and the offender released.

Our faith believes that the possibility for them to receive citation is a more compassionate policy than taking them to jail. Our jails and detention centers' cost the taxpayers between \$83-153 per person/per day. The money saved by reducing this population could be applied towards rehabilitation efforts for prevention, needed treatment or re-entry preparation.

SB 671 specifically outlines the situations in which the officers can and cannot issue citations. For example, any misdemeanor or local ordinance violation that does not carry a penalty of imprisonment may receive a citation; but not for more serious failures to comply with a protective order or abuse /neglect of an animal. Several counties have been part of a pilot program which has been successfully implementing this process for several years. It's time to offer it to all. This bill falls into the "smart about crime" category which UULM-MD supports.

The Unitarian Universalists ask you to apply their second principle of using compassion, equity and justice in our institutional systems and vote in favor of SB 671.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Clark

Karen Clark – UULM-MD Criminal Justice Task Force Chair

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