

## TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

### Support - House Bill 271 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Diversion Programs

*Judiciary Committee*

*February 12, 2021*

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in **support** of **House Bill 271 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Diversion Programs**. I would like to thank Delegate Ebersole for sponsoring this legislation.

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion programs are a promising new tool already available in some jurisdictions in Maryland, implemented by local law enforcement and State's Attorney. These programs are an encouraging step towards reducing the number of low-level drug users in our criminal justice system, something that most people would support. Getting low-level drug users and other offenders direct assistance, such as rehabilitation programs and other social services, instead of clogging up local courts and jails is a worthy cause. House Bill 271 codifies into law the authorization of these programs and provides broad guardrails. It empowers law enforcement to divert people who commit certain petty crimes out of the criminal justice system and directly into services they need. It also helps Law Enforcement by not having to go through the booking process, all while getting law enforcement back on the street faster to deal with more serious crimes.

It's time to take the next step in criminal justice reform and formally authorize a system to empower law enforcement to divert people out of the criminal justice system for low-level crimes. For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for House Bill 271. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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