

## **Fiona Apple Testimony**

My name is Fiona Apple and I have been court watching for over a year. I am writing to urge you to support virtual access to courts. I got involved in this movement after hearing about the horrible and inhumane conditions in the jails. I remain involved because the more I learn, the more I care. And I believe we have a duty as citizens of this planet, to look out for each other. Just as Jury duty is necessary for the people to participate in Democracy, so is having access to the courts.

This legislation must be passed because it is our constitutional right to have access to public court proceedings. The legislation should reflect that. Secondly, Without court watchers present, more and more injustices will happen inside of courtrooms and there will be a dangerous lack of accountability. Without accountability, the people will continue to distrust the system and there will be more division and unrest, and less progress. It is our right to observe what happens in the name of the people.

It is important to remember that the working people of Maryland, deserve a chance to attend the hearings of their loved ones. Most people cannot afford to take time off from work, to attend a court hearing if they have to leave their work premises in order to do so. Ensuring the rights of the people to attend virtually, will save many people's livelihoods and also make the courts more efficient.

In court, I've seen people get caught up in the system after having had their fourth amendment rights violated. I have seen countless people kept in jail, not because they are a danger or a flight risk, but because they are too poor to pay a bond. People are jailed and have their medications taken from them, sometimes putting their lives in danger. I have witnessed people in renal failure, be sent back to a cage with no promise of any medical attention.

Without observers to follow up on these cases, people might literally have died. I have seen people have to stay in a cage for unnecessary lengths simply because there was

no available interpreter to speak their language. I have seen cases wherein people have been harassed and profiled by police officers. I have seen that there are still so many open cases involving the police officers included in the do-not-call list. I have heard prosecutors and judges make jokes at the expense of the people they are meant to serve. This is all being done in the peoples' name, they deserve to see it too.

I urge you to pass this crucial legislation. Thank you for your time.