

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice and the Job Opportunities Task Force. I am a resident of Maryland District 46, and **I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 704.**



This bill will remove fees for pre-trial home monitoring systems for “indigent” defendants.

I am a prosecutor who has been working in the criminal justice system for nearly 15 years; unsurprisingly, I sometimes feel compelled to recommend that judges detain people who are charged with crimes because of public safety concerns. During the pandemic, judges began to consider home detention as a middle ground on pretrial detention, between holding folks in jail or releasing them with instructions to stay out of trouble. Like many of my colleagues, the pandemic led me to re-tune my thinking about pretrial detention and recommend home detention instead of jail when I felt it could safely be done. This should have been a good move for everyone, but it turned out the result was that we had repeated the mistakes we made with cash bail, by making people’s release from jail conditional on their monetary resources.

Last year, Senate Bill 23 was passed which provided funding for home detention and electronic monitoring, but only for fiscal year 2022; while COVID-19 may have been the catalyst for this policy, the moral, social, and financial imperatives demand it’s continuation. Without funding, people who are safe to be released after arrest, but who cannot afford their own electronic monitoring, are forced to remain in a jail cell, and people whose families scrape together the money to pay are left struggling to make ends meet with the knowledge that whenever their payments slip, the private detention company will report it to the court which will put the person back in jail.

Home detention and electronic monitoring come at a steep price: \$11–17 per day, which can add up to *over \$500 per month*, as the Baltimore Sun reported in August, 2020¹. These costs add up to even more as the Covid-19 pandemic causes delays and closures, meaning those charged with crimes will be in home detention for longer. While this may be a steep price for everyday folks, it’s actually a net savings to the state: Baltimore County recently eliminated home monitoring fees for its pretrial detainees, and announced that the cost of the home detention program (\$538,000 per year) was much lower than the cost to hold the same number of people in jail (\$3 million per year).²

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 704.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lindsay Keipper
2425 Fleet St.
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹<https://www.baltimoresun.com/coronavirus/bs-md-ci-cr-home-detention-coronavirus-20200828-aqhhndiaereorga6246jjnywqe-story.html>

² <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/county-news/2021/01/04/baltimore-county-eliminates-home-monitoring-fees>