



TESTIMONY OFFERED RELATING TO MARYLAND STATE SENATE BILL 0763
RELATING TO PROSECUTORIAL TRANSPARENCY
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Senators Smith, Waldstreicher, Sydnor and distinguished members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Collection and Publication of Criminal Case and Prosecutorial Information (SB 0793).

My name is LaTrina Antoine. I am the Editor-in-Chief of Baltimore Witness, a nonprofit organization that uses shoe-leather reporting and data science to track every homicide and non-fatal shooting case currently under adjudication in the Baltimore City Circuit Court.

Baltimore City is in crisis. In 2021, there were 339 homicides and 488 non-fatal shootings. There were also approximately 156 investigations with 79 arrests for homicide, and 111 known suspects arrested for non-fatal shootings. Of those arrested only 137 cases made it to adjudication, 17 of these cases were nolle prossed, approximately 82 cases received a conviction, 7 defendants were released on bail, and 310 plea offers were rejected.

The chronic lack of transparency in criminal justice and the woeful state of data collection and information in the city is reflected by efforts in this legislative session calling for greater transparency from the judiciary, pretrial services, and today, the prosecution's office.

We applaud the committee's effort to address this critical transparency issue. But, as the current bill (SB 0763) moves forward, we would urge the committee to consider factors that are needed to ensure a successful bill:

1. Legislative Regulation
2. Data Gathering Systems
3. Government Agency Cooperation
4. Validation

These four areas will transform any government push into substantial aid to the community by offering a different perspective to violent crime. However, a validator of the data is needed to guarantee success.

As evidenced by the recent data dump from the SAO, the office has lots of data and is more than happy to provide it. We do not have a data issue, instead we have a credibility issue. Fairly or not, every offering from the SAO is met with public skepticism.



And while Baltimore Witness has no view on State's Attorney Mosby's performance, we offer an observation:

- Based on our independent data, the SAO's data is accurate but misleading.

For example, last fall the SAO claimed convictions on 18 homicide charges. The implication is that 18 murderers were taken off the streets. However, there were 7 people convicted of those 18 charges. The SAO also claims a 97% conviction rate, without accounting for all the cases the office dismissed that were immediately expunged under previous legislation designed to protect those not charged.

Our point is not to suggest the SAO, or other prosecutors, need policing but rather to urge the committee to ensure independent data validation. As an example, we sent the committee a spreadsheet that carries data on homicide and non-fatal shooting cases in the city.

We respectfully request the committee include, in the bill (SB 0763), external validation to ensure the integrity of official data.