

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 704:

### Conditions of Pretrial Release – Home Detention Monitoring – Alterations and Extension

**TO:** Hon. William C. Smith, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Dwight Kerny

**DATE:** March 9, 2022

My name is Dwight Kerney, and the Job Opportunities Task Force invited me to testify in favor of Senate Bill 704 to maintain funding for pretrial home detention in Baltimore City. I am 62 years old, a lifelong resident of Baltimore City's 43rd District, and am currently experiencing the misfortune of paying obscene electronic monitoring fees that I simply cannot afford.

When my grandson was arrested, the judge offered him the option to either be put on home detention or wait in jail for months. As his guardian and in the midst of the current pandemic, I knew that having my 22-year old grandson sitting in jail would be detrimental to his physical, mental, spiritual, and psychological well-being. I care about my grandson and could not let that happen to him, especially since the courts were mainly closed and I did not know when his case would be heard. Once someone is in the system, it is very difficult to escape.

In August 2020, the court connected us with ASAP Home Detention where I was informed that I would have to pay for his electronic monitoring device. The initial hook up fee was **\$282 upfront**, which they said was prorated due to the first visit and that future payments would be twice a month. Two weeks later, I was charged \$212 for the bi-monthly payment and urinalysis costs, and told that the next payment would be the regular rate. I was also informed that if I did not pay, my grandson would immediately be at risk for future jail time.

From September 2020 - March 2021, I paid \$364 per month (\$182 semi-monthly) to ASAP Home Detention with money that I simply do not have. Like many Americans, my wife and I have lost significant household wages since the pandemic started and we are struggling to pay our routine expenses including BGE, water, and vehicle maintenance. Worse yet, the court case continues to be postponed lengthening the overall number of necessary payments.

Senate Bill 704 will ensure that Marylanders in my grandson's position do not risk violating home detention and ending up in jail simply because the price of GPS monitoring exceeds our current monthly income. Something must be done to maintain funding for the court's current payment program and bring down the inflated price of GPS Monitoring for the hundreds of

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

thousands of Marylanders struggling. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 704.