

February 2, 2022

**Testimony on HB 208
Courts – Payment for Jury Service
Judiciary**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in support of HB 208, which would increase the per diem rate to \$30 for the first 5 days of jury service in one trial and \$50 for each day of service in one trial in excess of 5 days.

Low juror pay is a significant financial burden that prevents too many low-income people from serving on a jury. Most people cannot afford to miss one or even several days of work as they need to support themselves and their families. And because income inequality is strongly correlated with race, juries have become less racially diverse and tend to be composed only of those people who can afford to serve unpaid or who have employers that will pay them while they are serving.

Economic hardship should never be a barrier to someone serving on a jury. The current law places the rate jurors are paid at \$15 per day, which barely covers their transportation and meal expenses, let alone the opportunity cost of a lost day's wages.

Jury-diversity advocates have been calling for higher pay for jurors for almost three decades. Research shows that juries lacking in racial diversity exacerbate the harm the criminal legal system inflicts on people and communities of color – all-white juries deliberate less, are less likely to consider all of the evidence presented, make decisions predicated on racial bias more and convict black defendants at higher rates than white defendants.

Higher compensation for jury duty will help ensure that our jury pools are more reflective of the communities they are serving. This legislation will help put on a path to more diverse and inclusive juries and for that reason, we request a favorable report.