

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

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



**I have spent time working with young men who are on home detention monitoring. They struggle to pay for housing, food, transportation, and sometimes child support, while paying hundreds of additional dollars a MONTH (to be surveilled by the state) simply to stay out of jail.**

**And when they have a criminal record pending, I wonder how easy it is for them to find high-paying LEGAL work. In my observation, it is nearly impossible.**

**So I am testifying in strong support of House Bill 1011. This bill will remove fees for pre-trial home monitoring systems for “indigent” defendants.**

In a just legal system, no person should be kept in a jail cell simply because he cannot afford a monetary payment. Jailing people costs the state lots of money. It is far cheaper for the state to put someone on home detention.

But home detention and electronic monitoring come at a steep price to the individual: \$11–17 per day, which can add up to *over \$500 per month*, as the [Baltimore Sun reported in August, 2020](#). These costs add up even higher, as the Covid-19 pandemic causes court delays and closures, meaning those charged with crimes will be in home detention for longer.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, judges have increasingly opted for home detention and electronic monitoring. This is certainly better than jail. But it puts the people facing charges in an impossible bind.

It doesn't have to be this way; HB1011 can remedy this statewide. Effective January, 2021, Baltimore County eliminated the home monitoring fees. [Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski explained](#) clearly why this decision was made: *“This is an issue of simple fairness. Individuals on home detention, most of whom are individuals not convicted and awaiting adjudication of non-violent crime charges, should not have to face additional financial burdens...Expensive home monitoring fees create unnecessary impediments, and the elimination of home monitoring fees will better allow these residents to support themselves and their families.”* Additionally, the cost for eliminating the fees in the county (\$538,000 per year) was much lower than if those people were held in the detention center (more than \$3 million per year). Eliminating the fees or providing funding for those who need it may allow the state to put more money into other necessities.

Last year, Senate Bill 23 was enacted and provided funding for home detention and electronic monitoring, but only for Fiscal Year 2022. This year, House Bill 1011 can extend the funding. 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 extracting hundreds of dollars a month from indigent people who have simply been charged with a crime seems, well, exploitative.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of House Bill 1011**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Liz Simon-Higgs  
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore