



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY GARRETT COUNTY, MARYLAND

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SENATE BILL 570 CHRISTIAN MASH, STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR GARRETT COUNTY

POSITION: FAVORABLE FOR SB570 – CRIMINAL LAW – OFFENSES RELATED TO METHAMPHETAMINE – PENALTY

The Opioid Crisis has been a focus of public attention in recent years, as its human toll became impossible to ignore. Addressing the rise of Fentanyl and the corresponding increases in overdose fatalities was appropriately at the forefront of legislative efforts to tackle substance abuse. However, the dominance of those issues has obscured another rampant drug epidemic—the Methamphetamine Crisis.

Methamphetamine abuse has dramatically increased in recent years throughout northern and central Appalachia. Of particular importance for the consideration of the General Assembly, Garrett County has been negatively effected by this trend. Many in other Maryland counties would be surprised to hear that Methamphetamine is a primary drug of abuse in Garrett County.

Methamphetamine is an extremely harmful substance to the user. It has become increasingly common for methamphetamine to be a factor in fatal overdoses, especially among poly-substance users. The impacts on cardiovascular health have long been known in the medical community. Methamphetamine also can cause serious psychosis on its own and aggravate existing mental health conditions.

The effects of Methamphetamine ripple throughout families and communities. Fueled by the powerfully addictive qualities of this substance, users commit property crimes and can behave erratically. Users of methamphetamine cannot appropriately parent their children and this substance abuse (along with abuse of Opioids) places a remarkable amount of stress on the child welfare and foster care system.

With all of these terrible impacts, it is vital that Maryland increase the potential penalties for those who distribute, import, or manufacture methamphetamine. Current statutory maximums limit prosecutors and courts in their ability to fashion sentences that deter others from this behavior. An increase in the potential maximum sentence to twenty years would also allow



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for meaningful disincentives to recidivism when felons are ultimately released on parole or probation.

This bill should be viewed as an appropriate adjustment to the sentencing structure in drug crimes. It would enable courts to fashion appropriate sentences to deter methamphetamine distribution and incentivize meaningful probations upon release of offenders. This bill treats methamphetamine as the substance it is – one that has incredibly harmful impacts on individuals, families, and communities. I ask for your support for Senate Bill 570.