

Bill Number: SB 43
Scott D. Shellenberger, State's Attorney for Baltimore County
Opposed

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SCOTT D. SHELLENBERGER,
STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY,
IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 43
COURT PROCEEDINGS – REMOTE PUBLIC ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

I write in opposition to Senate Bill 43 that would allow for remote public access and participation of court proceedings. I object due to the fact that when people are in the courtroom authorities can observe them and make sure no video and audio is being recorded by a cell phone or other device. If people are in their homes nothing would prevent them from recording testimony and placing it on social media.

This type of access and possible recording can place the victims and witnesses testifying in criminal cases at risk. It is currently difficult enough to get victims and witnesses to come to court to testify against those charged with crimes of violence when the testimony takes place in front of relatives and friends of a defendant. Having the ability to watch and listen from home and record the testimony with a cell phone and the ability to put the video and audio on social media puts witnesses at even greater risk.

As a result of the Soderberg case, the Maryland Rules committee is currently working on a new rule to deal with the "Broadcast Ban" and these related issues.

I urge an unfavorable vote.