BILL NO:         House Bill 1143
TITLE:           Courts – Recordings of Proceedings - Access
COMMITTEE:       Judiciary
HEARING DATE:    March 8, 2023
POSITION:        **Favorable**

The Delivery of Legal Services Committee (DLS) of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission was formed to promote the fair administration of justice in the State of Maryland. The Committee supports and encourages free or low-cost legal services for people of limited means through legal services programs for the indigent, public interest legal organizations, *pro bono publico*, reduced fee, and other alternatives to traditional fee-for-service representation to provide access to the courts, and court alternatives for the resolution of disputes. The areas include legal practice and legal reform for the indigent and persons of modest means, for example, civil rights, consumer advocacy, civil and criminal legal services, and lawyer referral services. The Committee is comprised of a mix of practicing attorneys, including those working for civil legal aid organizations, private practitioners, and government attorneys, who all share a common goal: increasing access to justice.

House Bill 1143 seeks to require each court in the State to provide recordings of all public court proceedings upon request to the public. DLS supports House Bill 1143 as it will increase the opportunities for advocates to gain a better insight into the administration of justice, into patterns and practices that can be addressed systematically, and other barriers litigants face when attempting to access justice.

The Delivery of Legal Services Committee recognizes that the Maryland State Bar Association's position is in support of the theory of this legislation but opposed to the collateral consequences as drafted. The DLS does not take a position on the application and procedural application but is concerned only with the policy position of increasing access to the courts for members of the public.

For those reasons, the Delivery of Legal Services Committee urges a favorable report on HB1143.