

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 728

### **Correctional Services - Parole Supervision Fees and Drug and Alcohol Abuse Test Payment - Repeal**

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Jr., and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: February 28, 2024

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports Senate Bill 728, which would repeal the requirement for the Maryland Parole Commission (MPC) to assess a monthly \$50 fee as a condition of supervision for each individual on parole and supervised by the Division of Parole and Probation (DPP), and would repeal the authorization for DPP to require an individual on parole and supervised by DPP to pay for drug and alcohol abuse testing ordered by MPC.**

While fines and fees are experienced together, fees are distinct from fines; fees are not intended to be punitive and exist only to generate revenue. Fees operate as a regressive tax, forcing those least able to pay to fund the justice system, rather than evenly distributing the burden among everyone that it serves. These fees trap people in a perpetual cycle of debt and punishment when they are unable to pay. The specific fees being addressed in SB 728 particularly harmful, as they inflict additional economic burdens on individuals reentering society as well as their families. For people attempting to reengage in their communities, with employment, and be valuable members of society after serving a time of incarceration, an additional \$50 monthly fee that is tied to their freedom creates a tremendous burden to individuals and society at large.

In Maryland, approximately 8,800 individuals are on parole. A 2009 study by the Brennan Center found 77% of parole supervision debt went unpaid at the end of parole and was referred to the state's Central Collections Unit, where it was subject to a 17% collection fee penalty. It is far more fiscally responsible to eliminate these fees altogether, considering they are not being paid anyway, and the people being reincarcerated due to lack of payment add more financial burdens onto the state that far exceed what would have been collected had they paid their parole supervision debt. JOTF believes that SB 728 will help reverse the negative effects of this regressive system and ultimately benefit individual Marylanders and the state as a whole.

**For these reasons, JOTF supports Senate Bill 728 and urges a favorable report.**

**For more information, contact:**

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