



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE CITY

February 29, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of SB0827 – Courts and Judicial Proceedings - Jury Examination

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 827 – Jury Examination which aims to enhance the ability of attorneys to evaluate potential jurors through the voir dire process in state courts. As Baltimore City State's Attorney and an advocate for justice, I believe this bill represents a crucial step towards ensuring a more just and impartial legal system for all community members.

The proposed addition of section 8-423 to the Courts and Judicial Proceedings of the Annotated Code of Maryland as contemplated by SB827 is commendable. By proposing broader questioning ability during the voir dire process, this bill provides a much-needed tool for attorneys to better assess whether potential jurors are able to fairly and impartially evaluate the evidence presented during the course of trials conducted daily in state courts.

Jury selection is a critical stage during any trial proceeding. Voir dire is the tool through which attorneys and judges alike are able to determine whether potential jurors should be selected to sit on a jury. The importance of this process cannot be underscored enough. The responses provided by potential jurors during voir dire provide information that is assessed by judges and attorneys to determine the ability of each potential juror to be fair and impartial.

However, the current scope of the types of questions permitted during voir dire is quite limited here in Maryland. SB827 will greatly broaden that scope by permitting questions which tend to provide information relevant to considerations of fairness and impartiality. Obtaining more information from jurors will better inform the evaluation into whether potential jurors are able to be fair and impartial thereby promoting transparency, fairness, and efficiency in the jury selection process.



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In conclusion, I urge you to support Senate Bill 827 and advocate for its swift passage. The addition of this section reaffirms our shared commitment to upholding the principles of fairness, impartiality, and justice in our court system.

Sincerely,

Ivan J. Bates

Ivan J. Bates
State's Attorney for Baltimore City

By: Hassan Giordano
Chief, External Affairs Committee