

March 4, 2024

Maryland House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland
21401
410 – 841 – 3488

Dear Chairman Delegate Clippinger, Senator Smith, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Noah Wass. I am a concerned Baltimore city emergency medical services (EMS) clinician. I am writing to support HB565 and SB0036 because it is established medical fact that rapid transport to a trauma center can be the difference between life and death for victims of traumatic injuries like those often suffered in carceral settings. Without system oversight and data collection, we will never be able to stop those who need care from dying preventable deaths.

I became passionate about increasing reporting for in-custody deaths after transporting an incarcerated patient to the hospital in the midst of an ongoing seizure event, or “brain storm.” He became injury through an extremely vaguely described assault in custody. We realized after further questioning that prison officials kept this patient waiting in critical conditions for *hours* before even calling EMS. There is no doubt that this delay in care contributed to a poor outcome for this patient, and many like him who experience the same systemic failures.

This event disturbed me, but I am even more disturbed by how common an occurrence it is. An oversight board is important for protecting Marylanders in custody because we cannot begin to prevent these deaths without some medical, scientific understanding about how they occur. Gathering this data and investigating these deaths will allow the State to begin addressing the systemic issues at fault. We need to know about jail deaths in order to prevent them, and it is the State’s responsibility to ensure we collect and track this data.

Thank you, Chairman Delegate Luke Clippinger and the Judiciary Committee, Chairman Senator Will Smith and the Judicial Proceedings Committee, Sponsor Delegate Simmons, and Sponsor Senator Benson, for hearing my voice. Too many people are dying in government custody in this state. Worse, Maryland residents know very little about what’s happening to their loved ones. This bill will help. I urge you to support HB565 and SB0036.

Sincerely,

Noah Wass