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To: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA)
Subject: SB 621 – Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard
Date: February 10, 2025
Position: **Support**

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) **supports** Senate Bill 621 – Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard. SB 621 establishes minimum adequate security standards for courtroom security at all courthouse facilities; requires, beginning July 1, 2026, the presence of a certain number of security officers in every court room during certain proceedings; and requires by July 1, 2028, in every court room, the presence of one court security officer for any proceeding, two court security officers for any proceeding involving an incarcerated individual, and one additional officer for every four or fewer courtrooms on each floor of a courthouse.

MSBA represents more attorneys than any other organization across the state in all practice areas. Through its advocacy committees and various practice-specific sections, MSBA monitors and takes positions on legislation that protects the legal profession, preserves the integrity of the judicial system, and ensures access to justice for Marylanders.

Judges and attorneys who regularly engage in high-conflict matters are at great risk of physical harm and threats. MSBA practitioners have shared experiences of:

- Surveillance and stalking by case parties to their offices and outside their homes,
- Not having any security in courtrooms during heated family law cases, where case facts indicate abuse and violence between litigants,
- Changing phone numbers, email addresses, and upgrading security systems in response to threats of violence from litigants, and
- Requesting security escorts to and from courthouses.

SB 621 would provide additional minimum security first to those high-conflict courtrooms, including criminal, juvenile, and family proceedings, and those involving an incarcerated individual, and then expand over two years to provide additional minimum security for all court proceedings. Maryland must adopt appropriate minimum security standards for courtroom security across the state to preserve the well-being of all Marylanders. Judges and attorneys just be able to decide and present cases without fear for their safety or for their family.

For these reasons, MSBA respectfully urges a **favorable report on Senate Bill 621**.

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