



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 7, 2025

SPONSOR TESTIMONY
Senate Bill 507
Criminal Procedure - Diagnosis of Developmental
Disability of Intellectual Disability - Evidence

Chairman Smith and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce and provide crucial details regarding SB 507 - Criminal Procedure - Diagnosis of Developmental Disability of Intellectual Disability – Evidence.

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Helson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD.

This Bill is also cross-filed (HB0703) and cosponsored with Delegate Aaron Kaufman from the 18th Legislative District of Montgomery County, MD.

With us today and representing real-life reasons for this Bill are:

- Melissa Rosenberg - Executive Director of the Autism Society of Maryland
- Delancy Alfred - Public Policy Manager, Autism Society of America
- Sari Wisch, Chief of Staff, Delegate Aaron Kaufman's office

As Ms. Rosenberg will further elaborate, SB 507 addresses a critical issue in our criminal justice system focusing on how individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities are treated during their interactions with the law. It recognizes that these individuals may face unique challenges and, without proper consideration, may not receive a fair and just legal process.

Specifically, the bill allows for the introduction of evidence of certain diagnoses during the criminal proceedings (not after), ensuring that these diagnoses are considered when making decisions related to a defendant's pretrial release. It mandates that a judge or District Court commissioner consider whether a defendant has been diagnosed with a developmental or intellectual disability, acknowledging that these conditions can

significantly impact a person's ability to understand legal proceedings, follow court orders, or engage with the justice system in a typical manner.

After hearing from Ms. Rosenberg and our other speakers, I recommend and urge a FAVORABLE REPORT ON SB 507.