



NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

HANNIBAL KEMERER
CHIEF OF STAFF

ELIZABETH HILLIARD
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: HB 954 – Public Safety – State and Local Governments – Use of Unmanned Aircraft

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: February 25, 2025

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests a favorable ruling on HB 954.

As the use of drones by law enforcement proliferates throughout the state to previously unimaginable numbers, it is imperative that clear, transparent, and uniform guidelines be set out to prevent their misuse. By limiting their use to instances with a warrant and some exigent exceptions, this bill strikes the right balance between allowing law enforcement to perform its job and protecting the rights of individuals.

As our agency has said before the general assembly may want to take a more proactive approach in regulating future surveillance technologies. I would urge this committee to consider adopting a more wholistic approach in terms of regulating these technologies rather than the current piecemeal post hoc fashion. Such an approach would still allow for useful technologies to be implemented but ensure that they are done so in a transparent, constitutional and scientifically reliable manner.

For the foregoing reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges the Committee to support House Bill 954.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.

Authored by: Andrew Northrup, Senior Attorney, Forensics Division,

Andrew.northrup@maryland.gov