
MSCCSP



Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy

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Sen. Chris R. West

Executive Director

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TO: House Judiciary Committee

FROM: MSCCSP

RE: House Bill 1423, *Commission to Review and Assess Racial Disparities in the State Criminal Justice System - Establishment*

DATE: March 4, 2025

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy (MSCCSP) convened via videoconference on February 24, 2025, to discuss House Bill (HB) 1423. Sixteen of the nineteen commissioners participated in the videoconference. The majority of the commissioners present voted to support HB 1423 with amendments.

HB 1423 establishes a new *Commission to Review and Assess Racial Disparities in the State Criminal Justice System*. The proposed legislation would have a substantial operational and fiscal impact on the MSCCSP, as it would require the MSCCSP to staff a newly created commission charged with multiple complex initiatives. Many of the initiatives are outside of the purview of the MSCCSP, and the MSCCSP does not have the existing infrastructure and resources to meet the substantial additional requirements created by HB 1423.

Given these concerns, the MSCCSP Executive Director, David Soulé, met with the sponsor of HB 1423, Delegate Crutchfield. During this meeting, Dr. Soulé relayed his concerns about the limited resources of the MSCCSP and how many of the mandates of HB 1423 exceed the scope of the MSCCSP's work. Delegate Crutchfield understood the concerns and indicated she would offer an amendment to strike the MSCCSP as staff for the new commission (page 2, line 12).

Further, Dr. Soulé suggested striking the language on page 3, lines 4-6 that provides for the possibility of amending the Maryland Sentencing Guidelines with respect to the offender score calculation methodology for the purpose of reducing the impact of any previously existing racial and ethnic differences caused by excessive policing. The MSCCSP believes this language should be removed because the MSCCSP approved a study proposal to assess the guidelines offender score, and the study will begin this year. The study was recommended in the MSCCSP 2023 report, [*An Assessment of Racial Differences in Maryland Guidelines-Eligible Sentencing Events*](#). The MSCCSP is the most appropriate entity to study the offender score because it is directly related to the sentencing guidelines and the work of the MSCCSP. Delegate Crutchfield agreed with this recommendation and indicated that she would submit both amendments.

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The MSCCSP recognizes the need to study racial disparities in the State's criminal justice system and fully supports efforts to do so. The MSCCSP opposes the scope of the proposed legislation as it relates to the work of the MSCCSP. Accordingly, the MSCCSP's position on HB 1423 is favorable, provided it is amended as outlined above.

Finally, the MSCCSP notes that the legislation encompasses a wide range of initiatives, and a longer time frame should be considered for a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed initiatives.