



# LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-841-3185 • 301-858-3185 • 800-492-7122 Ext. 3185 • Fax 410-841-3175 • 301-858-3175 • Black.Caucus@house.state.md.us

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

**The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 1423 (HB1423) – Commission to Review and Assess Racial Disparities in the State Criminal Justice System.** This bill seeks to establish a commission dedicated to studying and addressing the racial disparities that persist throughout Maryland’s criminal justice system. Black Marylanders are disproportionately impacted by systemic inequities in policing, pretrial detention, sentencing, parole decisions, and data transparency. This commission will conduct crucial research, hold public hearings, and make recommendations to ensure that the justice system operates fairly for all Marylanders.

Maryland has the highest percentage of Black individuals incarcerated compared to its general population, with Black Marylanders making up approximately 30% of the state's population but 71% of those incarcerated. Nearly 80% of people who have served more than a decade in Maryland prisons are Black. These statistics highlight the urgent need to address the racial biases embedded in criminal justice policies. One significant issue HB1423 will examine is the felony murder rule, which disproportionately results in severe sentences for Black individuals who did not intend to commit murder. Additionally, Black individuals serving life sentences are rarely granted parole, despite data showing that long-term incarcerated individuals have exceptionally low recidivism rates. By reviewing these injustices, HB1423 will provide critical insights that can inform sentencing reforms and alternatives to incarceration that benefit Black Marylanders.

By establishing this commission, Maryland will take a necessary step toward dismantling structural racism within its justice system. HB1423 will increase transparency and accountability by examining racial disparities at every level—from law enforcement practices to judicial sentencing and parole decisions. The commission’s findings will help drive policies that reduce over-policing, prevent unnecessary incarceration, and promote rehabilitation over punitive measures. Ensuring that Maryland’s criminal justice system is fair and equitable is essential to protecting the rights and futures of Black Marylanders. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports HB1423.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland