



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 18, 2026

RE: **SB 544 - Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard**

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT SB 544 WITH AMENDMENTS**. SB 544 establishes a statutory minimum adequate security standard for courtroom security at all courthouse facilities throughout Maryland. Specifically, the bill would require that during court proceedings there be at least one qualified court security officer in each courtroom, with additional staffing for proceedings involving incarcerated individuals and higher staffing ratios based on the number of courtrooms per floor. These standards phase in beginning July 1, 2027, and expand further in July 2029.

MCPA and MSA support the stated purpose of SB 544, improving courtroom security, as free and fair access to justice requires safe court facilities. We agree that minimum standards can provide consistency across jurisdictions where security capabilities currently vary. That said, as currently drafted, this bill represents an unfunded mandate on sheriffs' offices. Sheriffs in many jurisdictions are already facing staffing shortages and budget constraints that can make it challenging to meet even current security needs.

For the bill to be workable, there must be dedicated funding provided to support the additional deputies and security personnel required to meet the bill's minimum standards. Without reliable state funding, sheriffs' offices, which are primarily responsible for courtroom security in county circuit courts, will be unable to meet the courtroom security standards required in this bill. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **SUPPORT SB 544 WITH AMENDMENTS** and urge a **FAVORABLE** report.