



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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Chair William C. Smith, Jr.
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for Senate Bill 322 - Courts - Jury Service - Disqualification. The bill changes who is disqualified from jury service based on their criminal history and updates jury service regulation. Senate Bill 322 will provide individuals a second chance to participate in their civic duties, help reduce systemic bias, and strengthen public confidence in the jury system. **This bill is a 2026 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland believes that SB 322 will help remove outdated laws and avoid unnecessary barriers. Establishing a diverse jury pool will allow the justice system to move forward with fairness and effectiveness, due to having a better reflection of the communities and leading to decisions that the public is more likely to trust. Individuals will be able to participate in their civic duty and advance their legitimacy through different perspectives. A diverse jury that represents the community will be viewed as trustworthy, as through studies show that juries made up of diverse jurors can consider different viewpoints and analyze the case more effectively and with greater legitimacy than individuals of similar backgrounds. Senate Bill 322 would provide greater diversity and opportunities for those who have completed their time to bring their viewpoints and perspectives to decisions that may affect an individual's life.

Additionally, SB 322 supports convicted felons in receiving a second chance in society. Many small states exclude people from jury service who were once convicted of or are facing charges for both felonies and misdemeanors that are punishable by incarceration for a year or more. Maryland, which has the highest overrepresentation of Black people, has one of the most restrictive jury exclusion, with around 71% of the prison population compared to the 29% of the state population. The percentages show a disadvantage that the minority communities are faced with, as they often lack individuals who represent them and participate in decisions that affect another individual's life. Senate Bill 322 directly acknowledges that, as black Marylanders are immensely represented in the incarceration population, and recognizes that the current jury selection should reflect the individuals rather than exclude them. The bill promotes fairness, a fresh start, and restored trust in the justice system by allowing Marylanders to serve as jurors regardless of their history and better reflect the communities they represent.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 322.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland