



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE CITY

March 31, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Office Building
2 East Miller Senate Office
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of HB336 – Criminal Procedure – District Court Commissioners and False Statements

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support in favor of HB336, which aims to amend certain provisions concerning Criminal Procedure – District Court Commissioners and False Statements within the State of Maryland. As Baltimore City State's Attorney, I believe this bill is crucial for enhancing the integrity of our legal system and safeguarding the rights of individuals.

HB336 proposes several important changes, the most significant being the prohibition of District Court Commissioners from issuing arrest warrants without review from the Office of the State's Attorney or the Maryland Judiciary. This measure ensures that victims are not abused by a system that is currently plagued by false statements. Victims who are faced with charges stemming from false statements face immense burdens, and as a result often spend time in jail, lose their jobs, and face a damaged reputation, significantly impacting their quality of life.

Through the diligent work of the House Judiciary Committee and its Criminal Law Subcommittee, I believe HB336 is a sufficient compromise to resolve the problem of false statements and the concerns that have been brought forth by those in opposition to its passage.

During the House floor discussion, concerns regarding the number of false statements, and the disposition of the false claims continued to be raised by its members. In response to these concerns, I would like to highlight some data put together by our District Court Division in Baltimore City that tracks *from the beginning of 2025 to present day*.

There has been a total of 112 warrants issued by the Court Commissioner. Of those cases, one was "dismissed", three received "probations before judgement", four were stetted, (13) received "not guilty" verdicts, (21) remained "active", (60) were "nolle prosequi", and only (10) cases resulted in "guilty" verdicts.



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If we do not consider the warrants that are currently active, only roughly 11% of the warrants that were issued by Court Commissioners resulted in successful prosecution. From the data, we are unable to determine whether the cases that did not result in guilty verdicts came from false statements.

I would like to highlight that achieving a guilty verdict in 11% of the cases that presented evidence to support beyond a reasonable doubt that a crime was committed are not the results we should consider acceptable, especially when each frivolous warrant used precious judicial resources to victimize an individual ultimately deemed innocent by the system.

Let us also look at the data for all civilian complaints without complaint numbers that did not have a law enforcement officer related to the case. As a point of clarity, I would note that these were all civilian complaints, and not just those that resulted in warrants being issued which may overlap with the data mentioned earlier.

From the beginning of 2025 to present day, there have been a total of 290 civilian complaints received by the Court Commissioner of which 112 resulted in warrants and 178 resulted in summons. Of those received by the Court Commissioner, one was "dismissed", four resulted in "probations before judgement", nine were "stetted", 165 were "nolle prosequi", 49 resulted in "not guilty" verdicts, 51 remained "active", and only (11) resulted in "guilty verdicts".

If we remove the active cases, then less than 5% of cases that come from the Court Commissioner's office resulted in a guilty verdict and more than 4 times as many cases resulted in not guilty verdicts. I reiterate that a system that only achieves 5-11% guilty verdicts of the complaints received shows that the system is wasting judicial resources.

HB336 reinforces the responsibilities of District Court Commissioners in upholding constitutional rights, determining probable cause, and ensuring due process for all individuals brought before them. These provisions underscore the importance of fair and impartial judicial proceedings, thereby promoting public trust and confidence in our legal system.

The current system is being taken advantage of, and citizens are being falsely accused and detained without any evidence ever being presented. This cannot, and should not, continue to be the law of this State.

In conclusion, I urge the favorable passage of **HB336** as received by the House Judiciary Committee. By enacting these proposed reforms, we can strengthen the trust in the judicial process



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and law enforcement, protect the rights of Maryland residents, and uphold the principles of fairness and accountability within our legal framework.

Moreover, the reporting requirements in this bill will allow this body to have the data they need to truly assess the impact of the Court Commissioner on the criminal justice system and our fellow citizens, thus allowing this body to develop more comprehensive policy to better serve the people of Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter and I look forward to positive progress on **HB336** and its passage in the State Senate.

Sincerely,

Ivan J. Bates

Ivan J. Bates
State's Attorney for Baltimore City