



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

March 18, 2026

Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett
Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **Support of House Bill 1605- Compensation for Individuals Erroneously Convicted-County Cost-Sharing - Repeal**

Dear Delegate Bartlett:

As the County Administrator for Washington County, I support the passage of House Bill 1605 that would repeal the 2025 BRFA provision requiring counties to fund 50% of wrongful conviction compensation awards.

As it currently stands, the State makes the decisions by determining eligibility, calculating awards, and setting the terms for the compensation process. The County has no role in prosecutions, appeals, or exonerations, which may lead to wrongful conviction eligibility. Additionally, the County has no role in the compensation decisions, which may include direct payments and ongoing benefits. The County is not involved in any of these determinations and yet footing half the bill.

All counties are left with growing fiscal exposure from the unpredictable costs of this process. These compensations decisions are difficult to budget for when the County has no control and are tied to these financial obligations without notice and outside the local budget cycle. Our County's budget is already strained from managing the increasing cost shifts and unfunded mandates from State decisions in the 2025 BRFA and the Blueprint. This unpredictable obligation reduces the County's ability to fund core services and maintain stable local budget.

For this reason, I ask that the House to support this bill at this time.

Sincerely,

Michelle Gordon
County Administrator