



Worcester County Administration

One West Market St. Room 1103 | Snow Hill MD 21863 | (410) 632-1194 | www.co.worcester.md.us

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett
Chair, Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 18, 2026

RE: HB 1605

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee:

I write to support the passage of HB 1605.

I have been the County Attorney of Worcester County since January 2020. Before that, I practiced at Venable in Baltimore City and Webb Wilber Cornbrooks in Salisbury. My decade of experience in Salisbury included representing many local governments, such as Wicomico County, Pocomoke City, Sharptown, and Salisbury.

I serve as the President of the Maryland Association of Counties Attorney Affiliate. I am also the Maryland Chair for the International Municipal Lawyers Association.

On behalf of Worcester County, I support HB 1605 repealing county cost-sharing for erroneous convictions. If the goal of the current law is to hold local officials accountable or to prevent future erroneous convictions, making county governments 50% liable for compensation simply doesn't achieve anything.

County governments, especially rural counties, have no levers to pull to prevent these tragic occurrences. State's attorneys offices prosecute state criminal law. State's attorneys are independently elected and do not answer to county government. In rural counties, these offices work with municipal police departments or the sheriff's office to investigate and prosecute these crimes. Rural counties don't have their own police departments. We have no direct involvement in law enforcement—either investigating the crime in the field or trying it in the courtroom.

No one is arguing that compensation to wrongfully incarcerated individuals isn't warranted. But making counties foot half the costs isn't sensible. County governments have no role in the criminal justice system and can do nothing to prevent future wrongful convictions.

I urge a favorable report on HB 1605.

Sincerely,

Roscoe R. Leslie

County Attorney, Worcester County