
ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

March 18, 2026

The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I write to express strong support for House
Bill 1605.

HB 1605 corrects a significant and inequitable provision in current law by eliminating the
requirement that counties pay a portion of compensation awarded to individuals who
were wrongfully convicted. Under existing statute, counties are responsible for 50
percent of these payments, creating an unpredictable and substantial financial
obligation that local governments have little ability to anticipate or control.

Wrongful conviction compensation is an important and necessary component of
ensuring justice for individuals who have been harmed by failures within the criminal
justice system. However, the responsibility for these payments should rest with the
State, which establishes and oversees the laws, policies, and institutions that govern
criminal prosecutions.

Harford County does not control any part of the criminal justice process that leads to
these outcomes. Prosecutorial decisions, evidentiary standards, and broader legal
frameworks are shaped at the State level. Requiring Harford County to bear any share
of these costs places a financial burden on local taxpayers for actions over which this
county has no authority.

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Unlike some jurisdictions, Harford County does not operate a police department under the authority of the County Executive. Law enforcement functions are carried out by an elected Sheriff, who is a State constitutional officer whose duties and directives are defined by State law and the General Assembly. As a result, Harford County Government does not have operational control over law enforcement policies or practices, nor does it have the ability to implement corrective actions that could mitigate future liability. Despite this lack of control, the County remains financially responsible under current law.

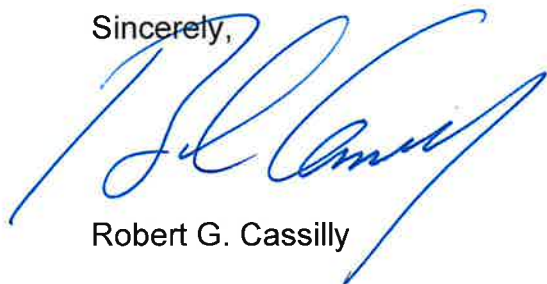
Additionally, these compensation awards can be significant in size and occur unpredictably, making it difficult for counties to budget responsibly. This creates fiscal instability and diverts resources away from essential local services such as public safety, education, and infrastructure.

HB 1605 provides a fair and practical solution by placing full financial responsibility with the State, where policy authority over the criminal justice system primarily resides. This change will allow Harford and all other counties to better manage their budgets while ensuring that individuals who were wrongfully convicted continue to receive appropriate compensation.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 1605.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to the people of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Cassilly