

CHARLOTTE A. CRUTCHFIELD, ESQ.
Legislative District 19
Montgomery County

Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Corrections

Local Government/Bi-County Agencies
and Administration



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 403
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3485
800-492-7122 Ext. 3485
Charlotte.Crutchfield@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 5, 2026

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

**Re: HB 1309- Commission to Review and Assess Racial Disparities in the State
Criminal Justice System - Establishment**

Dear Chairwoman Bartlett, Vice-Chair Davis and Committee:

House Bill 1309 seeks to establish a commission to examine racial disparities in the State's criminal justice system and to recommend policy solutions to address the disparate treatment of African Americans, Hispanics, and other non-White individuals.

Maryland's correctional facilities currently exhibit stark racial disparities in their inmate demographics. Although Black Marylanders comprise approximately 31.6% of the state's population, Black Marylanders account for over 72.5% of those incarcerated in Maryland correctional facilities. In fact, Maryland has the nation's highest percentage of Black people in its prisons when compared to the general population. Comprehensive data and analysis of these disparities are essential to effectively addressing the harmful consequences of mass incarceration, which has devastated communities and profoundly impacted individuals and families.

The Commission will examine disparities at every stage of the criminal justice system, from policing to prosecution and sentencing. It will also study potential reforms, including modifications to or the possible abolition of the State's felony murder doctrine in cases

where individuals had no clear intent to commit murder. This legislation follows a key recommendation from the Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative (MEJC), which proposed 18 policy changes to address long-standing issues contributing to racial disparities and high incarceration rates.

Maryland must uphold its commitment to justice and equity for all residents. Establishing this commission marks a vital first step toward creating a fairer and more effective justice system. By understanding the factors contributing to racial disparities, the state can implement policies that promote rehabilitation over punishment, reduce incarceration rates, and create a more just society for all Marylanders.

I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 1309.

Sincerely,

Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield