



**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 4, 2021**

SB 23 – Conditions of Pretrial Release – Home Detention Monitoring

UNFAVORABLE

To Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee,

This written testimony in **opposition** of “SB0023 – Conditions of Pretrial Release – Home Detention Monitoring” is submitted on behalf of Concerned Citizens for Bail Reform, a grassroots non-partisan organization created to advocate and educate the public on the need to reform our local criminal justice system by eliminating the need for cash bail in Prince George’s County, MD. We focus on issues around the negative impact of cash bail in our communities and how the bail system feeds mass incarceration.

We are opposed to home detention monitoring, in general, as it:

1. Imprisons and restricts movement of citizens who have not been convicted of a crime;
2. Stigmatizes and enforces a presumption of guilt of the individual; and
3. Places an unfair financial burden on impoverished residents and their families.

There are cases where the system has been manipulated by false witnesses and accusations that have led to innocent citizens forced to wear these devices until their innocence after many years was finally proven. The emotional trauma, embarrassment and stigmatizing effects of this must not be dismissed. Loss of employment which adds to the financial burden of having to pay for this electronic imprisonment on families is devastating.

Home detention monitoring is just as oppressive and unjust as the cash bail system. Unfortunately, we fear that Maryland’s poorest zip codes will continue to pay the highest amounts to the bail and home detention monitoring industries, which will most likely be one and the same. Defendants face fees of \$400 to \$600 a month. Sadly, faced with the choice of providing basic needs versus paying for home detention, some defendants are jailed.

We note that changes to SB0023 generally provide for the Pretrial Services Program Grant Fund (already established) to pay costs and fees to “private home detention monitoring agencies.” These costs and fees are in addition to what a defendant must pay directly to the agencies. So, in addition to draining the finances of low-income defendants and their families at the mercy of

these “agencies”, are we now opening the door for more state tax dollars to be given to them as well?

If we must use home monitors, we can look to Baltimore County to question the additional fees. They have eliminated these burdensome fees altogether. According to a [Baltimore Sun](#) Commentary, these fees “are financially unnecessary,” since home monitoring costs the state far less than holding someone in pretrial detention. The estimates of \$100/day to hold someone pretrial versus home detention monitoring at \$13-\$20/day speak to the savings.

We would like to propose any additional state funds under the “Pretrial Services Program Grant Fund” be used to enhance and improve pretrial service programs. The Prince George’s County Pretrial Services department along with others in the state can greatly benefit from more funding to provide mental health and other services that support our citizens to successfully move out of the criminal “justice” system.

Thank you.

Concerned Citizens for Bail Reform
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