

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 23:

Conditions of Pretrial Release - Home Detention Monitoring

TO: Hon. Will Smith, and Members of the Senate Judicial Committee

FROM: Dwight Kerney

DATE: February 3, 2021

My name is Dwight Kerney, and the Job Opportunities Task Force invited me to testify in favor of Senate Bill 23 to eliminate the cost of monthly home detention monitoring fees.

I am 61 years old, a lifelong resident of Baltimore City's 43rd District, and am currently experiencing the misfortune of paying obscene electronic monitoring fees that I simply cannot afford.

When my grandson was arrested, the judge offered him the option to either be put on home detention or wait in jail for months. As his guardian and in the midst of the current pandemic, I knew that having my 21-year old grandson sitting in jail would be detrimental to his physical, mental, spiritual, and psychological well being. I care about my grandson and could not let that happen to him, especially since the courts were mainly closed and I did not know when his case would be heard. Once someone is in the system, it is very difficult to escape.

In August, the court connected us with ASAP Home Detention where I was informed that I would have to pay for his electronic monitoring device. The initial hook up fee was **\$282 upfront**, which they said was prorated due to the first visit and that future payments would be twice a month. Two weeks later, I was charged \$212 for the bi-monthly payment and urinalysis costs, and told that the next payment would be the regular rate. I was also informed that if I did not pay, my grandson would immediately be at risk for future jail time.

Since September 2020, I have been paying \$364 per month (\$182 semi-monthly) to ASAP Home Detention with money that I simply do not have. Like many Americans, my wife and I have lost significant household wages since the pandemic started and we are struggling to pay our routine expenses including BGE, water, and vehicle maintenance. Worse yet, the court case continues to be postponed lengthening the overall number of necessary payments.

Senate Bill 23 will ensure that my grandson does not risk violating home detention and ending up in jail simply because the price of GPS monitoring exceeds our current monthly income. Something must be done to bring down the inflated price of GPS Monitoring for the hundreds of thousands of Marylanders struggling financially during this economic depression. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 23.