

I am writing in support of HB0413, Judges - Implicit Bias - Testing, Training, and Evaluation, put forward by Del. Wells.

I have written before that bias exists everywhere. No person, no matter their occupation or education level can evade it, and most of us are not aware we have it. I would say that up until a few years ago, I never would've thought I did, but it's been clear to me for a while that I did and still do. And, sadly, it's also clear to me, that how I treated others likely was affected by my bias. It is unavoidable.

At this point, I don't believe anyone needs to provide more evidence showing that there is disparity throughout our criminal justice as far as the treatment that people of color receive. No exception to this is how judges view, consider, treat, and sentence people of color, in particular, with harsher sentences given to BIPOC for the same crime. Thank goodness we have a whole wealth of data available to us confirming this. And the kicker is that many judges, just like all citizens, don't believe they have it.

I had an open conversation about bias with a white judge on a pickleball court last year. He had made some disparaging coded racial remarks prior, and I later brought up the subject about bias. We had a good long non-confrontational discussion about bias and whether he thought he had any, and whether it might be a factor in any of his cases. He repeatedly said he didn't think he did, and yet, in his casual conversations, he certainly showed that he did. If he doesn't recognize he has it, he will never be able to be conscious of how it might play a factor in his treatment of those who come before him.

That's why it's so important that every judge in Maryland should have the implicit bias training, so that they can be aware of it and keep it in mind as they treat others.

Respectfully,

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