



House Bill 1331

Maryland Criminal Justice Debt Elimination and Prevention Act of 2021

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
with AMENDMENTS

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: March 9, 2021

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1331 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill addresses a topic already raised through legislation this session – fees for home monitoring services. HB 126, already passed by this Committee and the full House, created a balanced approach to address the use of such fees during pretrial, and counties would urge that incentive-based approach with any broader legislation.

Local corrections already suffer a deluge of effects, each compounding the costs of delivering their services. State reductions to inmate cost reimbursement during the “great recession” have not been restored (or even re-evaluated), leaving counties to support these costs through general revenues. Meanwhile, county budgets, already pressured by ambitious State-mandated school funding requirements and a variety of community needs, have this year been ravaged by public health needs and other pandemic-driven costs.

County leaders must constantly manage their scarce financial resources. Delivering public services, including safe and efficient correctional facilities, is among those challenges. The direction toward home detention as a condition of alternative sentences or pretrial arrangements is substantial, driven by both justice and financial considerations. MACo urges that the General Assembly continue to pursue a path of collaboration, and incentive, rather than merely eliminate options in delivering local services. The model of HB 126, a bill MACo supported, is a far preferable approach to this concern rather than the absolute ban envisioned under HB 1331 as drafted.

For this reason, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1331 **WITH AMENDMENTS** to create appropriate incentives to abandon these fees, rather than a complete elimination of these programs. Counties would be pleased to work with the Committee and sponsor to help advance that mutually beneficial policy goal.