

SUPPORT HB 240 - text message reminders for court hearings

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM
Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



TO: Chair Luke Clippinger and House Judiciary Com.
FROM: Phil Caroom, MAJR Executive Committee
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Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR - www.ma4jr.org) strongly supports House Bill 240 to study Maryland's as-yet minimal use of text messages as reminders for court hearings.

According to a NYC area study of a similar system, "A randomized evaluation found that text message reminders were able to reduce FTA by up to 26 percent, translating to 3,700 fewer arrest warrants per year. The results indicate that criminal justice policies that focus on behavioral barriers can reduce negative consequences for both citizens and the criminal justice system, without resorting to the traditional lever of increasing enforcement." See University of Chicago-Crime Lab Report, January 2018.

The same study reported that the cost of such text messages was less than \$.01 each. If one compares this minimal cost to the much greater costs of a police officer or deputy executing an arrest warrant, the forgetful citizen being processed and, perhaps, held overnight or over a weekend until a court review is available, the benefits of the text message system are unmistakable. Sometimes, such arrests and even temporary time in detention can adversely impact employment. The loss of employment, in turn, can result in other community ills, including further criminal involvement.

For all these reasons, MAJR strongly urges a favorable report on HB 240.

PLEASE NOTE: Phil Caroom offers this testimony for Md. Alliance for Justice Reform and not for the Md. Judiciary or any other unit of state government.