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Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland Applauds Maryland Legislature's Action to Protect Landmark Bail Reform Ruling

BALTIMORE - Members of the [Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland](#) ("The Coalition") commend state elected officials and legislators for rejecting the for-profit bail and insurance industry's efforts to undermine significant reform in our pretrial systems.

Senate Bill 983, which was heavily promoted by the bail bond industry and its lobbyists, would have overturned a judicial rule unanimously passed by the state's highest court, the Maryland Court of Appeals. The revised judicial rule, slated to go into effect in July, requires judges to prioritize more effective, non-financial conditions, rather than money bail, to assure an individual's appearance in court. As a result of the legislature's rejection of Senate Bill 983, courts will be prohibited from imposing a financial condition that a charged person cannot afford to pay.

Senate Bill 983 would have had other negative consequences in addition to keeping poor and working class defendants in jail simply because they could not afford money bail. It would have undermined public safety by allowing people considered dangerous to buy their way out of jail. It also would have exacerbated the already troubling racial disparities in the pretrial system, where people of color are more likely to remain incarcerated and pay bondsmen higher fees to regain liberty.

As a next step, we urge Marylanders to join us in our call for all state legislators to build upon this recent action by supporting future legislation that will:

- **Reduce** unnecessary arrests and detentions that disrupt and destabilize families and communities;
- **Replace** discriminatory commercial bond with decision-making tools that are transparent, evidence-based, community-led, standardized, and free from racial, ethnic and gender biases;
- **Limit** pretrial detention to the small number of people who either pose a threat to public safety or are a serious flight risk;
- **Expand** Maryland's reliance on community-based supports that aid people in

- making court appearances and remaining law-abiding while cases are pending;
and,
- **Ensure** community oversight of pretrial release decisions through ongoing data collection, evaluation, and transparency that is led by individuals and organizations representative of and accountable to those most directly impacted by discriminatory pretrial practices.

The coming year will provide opportunities to study the impact of the Court of Appeals' rule change and develop responses-both administrative and legislative-that will ensure its strongest possible implementation. We look to Maryland's decision makers to continue to work to craft a fairer, safer and more cost effective pretrial justice system in which low risk people are released without regard to their finances and only the small number who present an unmanageable threat to public safety are detained. Only then will Maryland have a pretrial system that upholds justice and improves public safety.

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***Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland:** Power Inside, Leaders of A Beautiful Struggle, Office of the Public Defender, Public Justice Center, Progressive Maryland, American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland, University of Baltimore Law School's Pretrial Justice Clinic, Justice Policy Institute, Open Society Policy Center, Pretrial Justice Institute, Job Opportunities Task Force, Baltimore Action Legal Team, Out for Justice, University of Maryland School of Law Access to Justice Clinic*