



Contact: Sadie Rose-Stern, SRose-Stern@justicepolicy.org

<https://www.safeandjustmd.org/>

<https://twitter.com/SafeandJustMD>

PRESS RELEASE

January 10, 2017

End the Bail Lobby's Corrupting Influence in Annapolis

The Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland urges lawmakers to return donations from bail-bonds industry, bolster pretrial services statewide, and work to end the for-profit bail system in Maryland

ANNAPOLIS, MD—In an effort to restore the integrity of the legislative process in light of allegations that bail-bonds industry lobbyists offered illegal bribes to Sen. Nathaniel Oaks (D, Baltimore City), and at least one other elected official, the Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland calls for the following steps to be taken immediately:

- **Maryland legislators should not accept any contributions from the bail-bond industry.**
- **Any legislator who received contributions from the bail-bonds industry in 2017 should return the money or donate it to charity.**
- **Any legislation put forward or supported by the bail-bond industry during the 2018 General Assembly is tainted and illegitimate and should not be considered.**

The illegal bribes described in new court documents are in addition to the hundreds of thousands of dollars that the industry has spent in Maryland on campaign contributions, as detailed in last year's Common Cause report, *Pay to Play*. Maryland is one of the top states for campaign donations by the bail industry, coming in behind only California and Florida.

At the end of the day, the for-profit commercial bond system should have no place in Maryland and should be abolished.

The state should immediately shift focus toward investing in statewide pretrial services to allow the Maryland Court of Appeals ruling that defendants can't be held because they can't afford bail to fully take effect.

A new OSI-Baltimore report, *Steps in the Right Direction: Maryland Counties Leading the Way in Pretrial Services*, clearly demonstrates that pretrial services in Montgomery and St. Mary's counties and Baltimore City have improved public safety and saved substantial money. A statewide system would result in additional cost-saving and enhance safety for the state.

The Coalition calls on Governor Hogan to include funding for the implementation of pretrial services throughout the state in his 2018 budget. The impact of the judicial rule change that took effect in July, 2017, cannot be assessed until effective pretrial services are implemented statewide.

The **Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland** is committed to an alternative statewide system of pretrial justice that embodies the following principles:

1. Reduces unnecessary arrests and detentions that disrupt and destabilize families and communities,
2. Replaces discriminatory commercial bond with decision-making tools that are transparent, evidence-based, community-led, standardized, and free from racial, ethnic, and gender biases,
3. Limits pretrial detention to the small number of people who either pose a threat to public safety *or* are a serious flight risk,
4. Expands Maryland's reliance on community-based supports that aid people in making their court appearances and remaining law-abiding while their case is pending, and
5. Ensures community oversight of pretrial release decisions through ongoing data collection, evaluation, and transparency that is led by individuals and organizations that are the most representative of and accountable to those most directly impacted by discriminatory pretrial practices.

