



Senate Bill 879

Criminal Procedure - Pretrial Release - Pilot Program and Conditions

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: March 1, 2017

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 879 as it seeks to improve and support pretrial services across the state. MACo's comments are limited to the portions of the bill that relate to pretrial service support and pilot programs.

SB 879 would establish a Pretrial Resource Center within the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Service's Division of Parole and Probation. It would also establish a Pretrial Release Pilot Program. The resource center would provide counties with technical assistance, training, research, and best practices for managing a pretrial program. These services would help ensure that local pretrial programs are current on standards and are operating in the most effective manner. The pilot program provides a means of regionally evaluating pretrial programs and for testing a risk-assessment tool that would be developed by the pilot program.

Much debate has centered on the issue of bail, however pretrial reform has been an underlying element. Pretrial programs help to mitigate the fiscal and human cost concerns with unnecessary incarceration. About half of the counties in Maryland operate some form of a pretrial program. Those that do not, often partner with parole and probation to provide such services. These programs help support safety and efficiency by ensuring the appropriate high risk individuals are incarcerated, while the appropriate low risk individuals are released.

SB 879 provides support to local pretrial programs and offers a means of piloting a risk assessment tool. Counties support an efficient and effective pretrial system and efforts to improve that system. For these reasons MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 879.