February 8, 2019

Senator Bobby A. Zirkin  
Chair  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Senator William C. Smith, Jr.  
Vice Chair  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Maryland Senate Bill 551 – Pretrial Release Services Program – Victim Notification

Dear Chair Zirkin and Vice-Chair Smith:

On behalf of the American Bar Association (ABA), with over 400,000 members worldwide, including almost 10,000 members in Maryland, I write to express our support for the victim notification provisions included in Maryland Senate Bill 551, Pretrial Release Services Program.

The ABA strongly supports providing victims of crimes with information throughout the criminal justice process, including during the pretrial release process. Pretrial release takes up an entire volume of the ABA Standards for Criminal Justice that our Association adopted to help guide policymakers and practitioners working in this arena. These standards resulted from a collaboration between prosecutors, defenders, judges, and academics working with our Association on critical criminal justice issues. Standard 10-6.1 addresses Notice to Victims of Crime and states:

As part of the pretrial release process, the judicial officer should direct the appropriate office or agency to provide victim(s) of the crime with notice of any crime charged, any conditions imposed on the defendant including those related to possession or purchase of firearms, and methods of seeking enforcement of release conditions.

Consistent with ABA Standard 10-6.1, Maryland Senate Bill 551 would provide victims with notice of any crime charged and, if the defendant is released, with notice of the conditions of the release; how to report any potential violations of those conditions; and how to request modification of the conditions. The ABA supports Maryland’s effort to give crime victims information about pretrial release decisions. We look forward to your Committee’s acting favorably on the bill and passing legislation that recognizes the importance of providing relevant information to victims to help ensure their safety.

Thank you for considering the views of the American Bar Association. If you have any questions regarding the ABA’s position on this legislation, please contact me or Ken Goldsmith, Senior Legislative Counsel, at (202) 662-1789; kenneth.goldsmith@americanbar.org.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Carlson

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