

The Baltimore Quaker Peace & Justice Committee (BQPJC) was active on several policies in the Maryland legislature this session, which closed on April 10, 2017. Briefly:

### **On Criminal Justice -- Money Bail:**

Thanks to the many Quakers and others who made repeated rounds of phone calls to their state legislators. We can now thank them for rejecting the for-profit bail industry's efforts to undermine significant reform in our pretrial systems.

The session began with over a dozen contending reform bills introduced in Annapolis. The serious reform bills promoted by Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform and the Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland were knocked out in early rounds of legislative dickering. However, citizens' calls defeated the worst bill, with the result that the Legislature did not undo the very important ruling by Maryland's highest court. In this case, no legislation became the best outcome.

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.

Follow this unfinished work -- and related issues of ending solitary confinement practices and permitting the Parole Board to decide to release people with life sentences -- by viewing the web pages for MAJR, <http://www.ma4jr.org/initiatives/>, and the Coalition for a Safe and Just Maryland, at <https://www.safeandjustmd.org/>.

## **On Immigration – The Trust Act:**

More than 350 cities, counties, and other jurisdictions have enacted policies prohibiting local officials from doing things like asking people about their immigration status, holding people so Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can detain them, or sharing information with ICE.

Police and other community members have pushed for these policies because it's crucial that everyone in the community, regardless of immigration status, be able to trust local officials and service providers.

Many Baltimore area Quakers joined immigration advocates and people of faith to press lawmakers this year to enact a bill that would limit police cooperation with federal deportation agents. The measure, known as the Trust Act, passed the House in March, however a Senate committee advanced only portions of the measure. The key language would bar police and corrections officers from detaining undocumented immigrants on behalf of federal immigration authorities unless they have a judicial warrant. But the Senate removed that language. Governor Hogan had pledged to veto the original Trust Act, but has not stated his view about the watered-down version.

Friends seeking more information may wish to read the resources provided by American Friends Service Committee, <https://www.afsc.org/sanctuaryincities>.