

Legislation and policy issues before the Maryland General Assembly and the Governor

When *The Right Investment?: Corrections Spending in Baltimore City* released in February, 2015, legislators in Annapolis were considering a range of policy proposals that could impact corrections spending and other public investments. Depending on how policymakers respond, these policy initiatives might reduce the number of people returned to prison, reduce the length-of-time people are incarcerated, reduce the number of people in jail, and improve data collection and policy coordination in public safety.

Reducing the number of people returned to prison.

When someone is convicted of a crime, they may face challenges long after they have served their sentence obtaining and keeping employment, finding stable housing, and may face other restrictions because of their criminal record.

Under [HB 244 / SB 526 - Maryland Second Chance Act of 2015](#), people would be able to petition the courts to shield certain nonviolent misdemeanor convictions from the public view after a 3-year waiting period. [HB 304 / SB 652 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records](#), would repeal the rule prohibiting expungement of eligible non-convictions if a subsequent conviction occurs. Under [SB 651 / HB 124 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of a Crime That is No Longer a Crime](#), a person could file a petition for expungement if the person was convicted of an act that is no longer classified as a crime in Maryland. Under [SB686/HB1059 Criminal Procedure – Maryland Uniform Collateral Consequences of Conviction Act](#), the Attorney General would take specified steps to identify, collect, and publish in a specified manner laws that impose a specified collateral sanction on a person who is convicted of a specified offense.

Reducing the length-of-stay in prison.

When individuals are convicted and sentenced under mandatory minimum sentences, or face onerous restrictions on their chances for parole, it can mean that someone may remain in prison long past a period that might have a public safety benefit.

Under [SB111/HB303 Inmates – Life Imprisonment – Parole Reform](#), the law change would change the circumstance and remove the need for the governor’s approval of parole commission decisions for individuals serving parole eligible life sentences. Under [HB 121 Criminal Procedure - Drug-Related Offenses - Repeal of Mandatory Minimum Sentences](#), specified mandatory minimum sentences for specified drug- related offenses would be repealed. Under [HB 0337/SB0366 Correctional Services - Sentencing Review and Parole Eligibility - Juvenile Offenders Sentenced as Adults](#), the process by which parole eligibility for a person sentenced for an offense committed before the person's 18th birthday would be changed.

Reduce the number of people in jail.

In December 2013, a [legislative taskforce recommended that the state of Maryland should spend \\$533 million to replace the Baltimore City Detention Center with a new, larger jail](#). Maryland

policymakers also have been considering a set of recommendations of [a task force on statewide pretrial issues that could reduce Baltimore City and Maryland's overall use of jails](#).

Improve data collection and policy coordination.

Under [HB 0388/SB 602 Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council](#), a Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council would be established in the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention charged with developing a statewide policy framework to reduce spending on corrections and reinvest in strategies to increase public safety and reduce recidivism, and would be required to provide their findings to legislature and Governor before January 1, 2016. Under [HB 0678, General Assembly - Fiscal Notes - Criminal Justice Policy Impact Statements](#), the law would require a fiscal note for a bill to include a criminal justice policy impact statement if the bill creates a criminal offense, significantly alters the elements of an existing criminal offense, alters the penalties applicable to a criminal offense, or changes existing sentencing, parole, or probation procedures.

This list of issues and legislation before policymakers in Maryland in February, 2015 is not an endorsement of a specific bill, or a thorough accounting of all criminal justice legislation or budget issues being considered in 2015. For more information on legislation or policy initiatives before the Maryland Legislature or the executive on criminal justice policy, visit the [General Assembly of Maryland](#) website, or the [Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention in Maryland](#).