

Criminal Justice Taskforce Moving Forward – In Harford County, In Annapolis, and In Baltimore

The Criminal Justice Task Force is moving forward in 2020-21 with a focus on Policing in Maryland.

BRIDGE Maryland Inc (BMI), as part of a Harford County Coalition that included the NAACP Harford County Chapter, Together We Will Harford County/Upper Chesapeake, Harford County Caucus of African American Leaders, conducted 4 Community Forums with four different Harford County law enforcement agencies covering 10 questions related to policing practices. Their primary target was to stop choke holds and kneeling on the neck. Over 700 people were involved in the online meetings. The last meeting with the Harford County Sheriff had 25 questions from those in attendance. We are working to schedule follow-up meetings. BRIDGE Maryland Inc. is working to use these actions to expand our footprint into Harford County.

Adrienne Jones, MD. Speaker of the House and Luke Clippinger, Chair of House Judiciary Committee announced the formation of a task force to look into Policing in the State of Maryland. Members of BMI's Criminal Justice Task Force are closely monitoring developments in Annapolis. At this point, focus seems to be on Use of Force by police departments and the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights which protects police who are accused of misconduct. Information and videos of the meetings can be found at <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Committees/Details?cmte=pra>. BMI is working on testimonies to be heard by this group on August 6th. Protect Our Minors Act from 2020 session is high on BMI's demand list. This legislation would require police to:

- Mirandize a minor using standardized age appropriate language.
- Notify a parent/guardian immediately when their minor is in custody.
- Require that a minor speak with legal counsel prior to custodial interrogation.

Rev. Tilghman has met with Kathy Szeliga and Susan McComas, who are on the taskforce and represent portions of Harford County.

Will Smith, chair of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee issued a statement of his intention for legislation for the next General Assembly session related to Criminal Justice. BMI Criminal Justice Task Force leaders are working to get a meeting with Sen. Smith.

BRIDGE Maryland Inc. Religious Leaders Caucus has met with Baltimore City Police Commissioner Michael Harrison to provide prayers and support to him as he works to meet the Federal consent decree and to hold him accountable when and if members of his department fail to meet the standards of police department policy.

In late August through the end of September, BMI will be conducting a phone outreach to make sure registered voters understand exactly what they need to do in order to ensure their vote is counted in November. We will also be having conversations with them regarding our Criminal Justice Agenda for the 2021 Maryland Legislative Session.

If you would like to be involved in our Criminal Justice efforts, click on the Contact Us link above and indicate your interest.