On March 23, the Baltimore City State’s Attorney, alongside prominent public health officials and criminal justice reform groups, sent Governor Larry Hogan a detailed set of proposals to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 behind prison walls. The office realized early on that coronavirus was going to represent a major challenge to the criminal justice system and it was imperative to act quickly.

The first set of policies entailed stopping the flow of people into the jail system. The Baltimore City SAO decided not to prosecute a range of low-level offenses such as drug possession and trespassing where offenders would already likely be released pre-trial at the risk of exposing officers, central booking staff, other inmates, and the larger community to the potential spread of the virus.

The Baltimore City SAO was supported by its partners at the Baltimore Police Department who decided to use their discretion in not making arrests for the same low-level offenses. The decision not to prosecute a range of low-level offenses resulted in a 56% reduction of offenders in the jail system.

“As chief prosecutor, public safety is and always will be my top priority. Prosecutors are administrators of the criminal justice system and you have to be committed to justice over convictions and protecting public safety and the well-being over everyone in our community, which is inclusive of those who are currently in prison and/or jail.” —State’s Attorney Mosby

“...”
STATE’S ATTORNEY ADVOCATES FOR RELEASE OF NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS STATEWIDE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

in the jail population from this time last year. And most importantly, there has not been an uptick in reports of these same low-level crimes. It shows public health and public safety can be balanced. State’s Attorney Mosby re-located of Public Safety and Corrections (DPSC) and Office of the Public Defender (OPD), the Baltimore City SAO has recommended the release of over 500 people though expanded bail review criteria and supported the release of certain

“It’s important to clarify and for everyone to understand that public safety has always been paramount in our recommendations and our goal in de-populating the jails and prisons with those that do not present public safety risks was to provide the DPSC the capability of properly handling those that do present a public safety threat and must remain in jails and prisons pre and/or post trial. ” – State’s Attorney Mosby

and re-deployed her agency’s 24-hour Central Booking staff from the Central Booking facility to operating remotely following the Governor’s declaration of a state of emergency, concerned about the health challenges presented to those that work within the jail, after decades of being housed in the Central Booking facility.

The Baltimore City SAO also expanded bail review criteria, requiring prosecutors to start from the presumption that defendants be released on their own recognizance with conditions or home detention – barring those individuals that present a public safety concern. Through the collective and collaborative efforts of Department pre-trial, and early-release of post-trial individuals with nonviolent offenses. Prosecutors are not, and have never asked for, violent offenders to be released. An arrest alert tracking system has been set up for those individuals who have been recommended for release to ensure accountability.

Finally, the Baltimore City SAO led the charge in pushing the Governor to take action across the state, successfully convincing him to reduce the prison population via Executive Order.

To learn more about the Baltimore City SAO’s efforts to decarcerate prisons during the COVID-19 crisis, click here.

COVID-19 AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO MITIGATE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services has modified its operations to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, and has emergency plans in place designed to protect the incarcerated population, staff and their families. The Department has shut down intake, suspended visitation while making remote communication free to inmates, eliminated group programming and contact activities, and is requiring staff to undergo health screenings at all entry points. Parole and Probation staff are now on telework.

WHO SHOULD I REACH OUT TO ABOUT MY INCARCERATED LOVED ONE?

The Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPSCS) has set up a hotline at 410-769-6419 for loved ones to call to have their outbreak-related questions answered.

WHEN DOES JURY TRIALS START?

Beginning October 5, courts will resume full operations, including jury trials. There will still be limits on the concentration of individuals to allow for social distancing. Face masks, temperature checks, and other pre-screening measures will be utilized to ensure juror safety.

WHEN WILL THE PUBLIC BE ABLE TO ENTER A COURTROOM AGAIN?

On July 20, The Offices of the Clerks of the Circuit Courts and the clerks’ offices of the District Court will be open to the public. There will be limited court proceedings during this time.

STATE’S ATTORNEY REMINDS CITY RESIDENTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES

The Baltimore City State’s Attorney would like to remind residents of the resources available to them if they are experiencing domestic violence.

“Not only are many of our residents staying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are also experiencing financial hardship,” said State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby. “These factors can contribute to domestic violence, but it is important to remember that there are a wealth of resources available to victims and witnesses of this extremely damaging crime.”

If you or a loved one are experiencing domestic violence, please click here for a list of organizations to reach out to for assistance. You are not alone, together we are stronger.
STATE’S ATTORNEY’S OFFICE TAKES YOUTH PROGRAMMING VIRTUAL

On Thursday, April 30, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., the Baltimore City SAO hosted its first virtual Court in the Community in partnership with criminal justice and public health experts on Facebook Live. The event unpacked the impact of COVID-19 on the criminal justice system, including the functions of our court system. Panelists discussed the importance of decarcerating correctional facilities, increased testing of inmates and staff, as well as how current court cases have been impacted.

"It is important that, no matter how long we socially distance in order to reduce the spread of this novel virus, we continue to communicate valuable information with Baltimore City residents," said State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby who moderated the virtual discussion. "It is paramount that people understand the strong correlation between the health of our incarcerated population and the health of our society."

Stay tuned to @BaltimoreSAO on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram for more updates on Baltimore’s COVID-19 response.

Baltimore SAO’s Crime Control and Prevention Unit is reformatting their summer youth programs to conform with COVID-19 social distancing measures. The Junior State’s Attorney (JSA) program and the Bmore Popup series will be hosted on the virtual video communication service, Zoom, for Baltimore City youth to continue to reap the benefits of these tried and true programs designed to deter them from criminal behavior and encourage them down the path of success.

The Junior State’s Attorney program is a six-week summer intensive for current and rising ninth-grade Baltimore City students. The JSA program aims to build trust and faith in the criminal justice profession by exposing students to careers in the fields of criminal justice and government. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, this year’s participants were selected based on a written essay, application and interview. These students will spend their virtual sessions meeting with judges, prosecutors, police officers, sheriff deputies, forensic experts, elected officials, civil rights activists, and more.

“This year we were determined to not let social distancing get in the way of this amazing learning opportunity that the JSA participants were so eager for back in January," said Crime Control and Prevention Unit Director Angel White. "Like year’s past, we’re looking forward to seeing these students learn and grow, even if it is through a computer screen.”

Baltimore City youth of all ages will be able to participate in the virtual Bmore Popup series on Friday evenings at 7:00 p.m. starting July 10 and continuing through August 28.

This year’s virtual format will provide youth a unique experience by combining local radio DJs, dance parties, giveaways, and the chance to interview celebrity guests alongside partnering city agencies with a wealth of resources and information. The event is made possible by DJ QuickSilva, DTLR, Radio One, Baltimore City Parks and Recreation, the Mayor’s Office of Children and Families, Baltimore City School Police, Baltimore City Health Department, and Baltimore City Schools.

Follow @BaltimoreSAO on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for the latest #BmorePopup details.*

A VIRTUAL COURT IN THE COMMUNITY
OUTREACH IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

Joan L. Wharton
Very good information
I CARE BALTIMORE: A NEW, CROSS-JURISDICTION VIOLENCE REDUCTION CAMPAIGN

A COALITION OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ANNOUNCED IN APRIL A NEW VIOLENCE REDUCTION PROGRAM, I CARE BALTIMORE.

I Care Baltimore is a multi-faceted program designed to reduce violent crime by empowering community members, by highlighting programs that are making a difference in the City of Baltimore by offering alternatives to violence, and by increasing awareness of the consequences of federal prosecution for violent repeat offenders.

The initiative was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Robert K. Hur; Executive Director Glenn Fueston of the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services; Director Tamika Gauvin of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice; Commissioner Michael Harrison of the Baltimore Police Department; and State’s Attorney for Baltimore City Marilyn J. Mosby.

"Collaboration and cooperation between Maryland’s stakeholders and leaders is the critical to upending the deeply entrenched violence that continues to plague Baltimore," said State’s Attorney Mosby. "We must look beyond surface-level solutions and take a holistic approach to reducing crime. The I Care Baltimore campaign is a perfect example of that approach."

The coalition has partnered with Urban One, Inc., which operates five stations in the Baltimore area, including WERQ 92-Q, to implement the program. The I Care Baltimore website is live and will be updated regularly. The website includes: monthly highlights of different community organizations helping make Baltimore a safer and healthier place to live; a highlighted organization each month; community resources, listed by area; a link to report crime tips anonymously; and a section where individuals can pledge their support to I Care Baltimore, either through specific actions or through monetary donations.

Baltimore faces many challenges but there are many good things happening in Baltimore, too. I Care is about uplifting the best of Baltimore City, understanding that the future is in our hands. It’s about helping citizens to get involved with the organizations that make Baltimore the greatest city in America.

VICTIMS AND WITNESSES CONTINUE TO BE A PRIORITY FOR THE STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

For the safety of jurors, court staff, witnesses, families, victims, and the prison population, the State’s Attorney’s Office has pushed for court cases to be postponed during this time. In light of these postponements, many victims and witnesses are in need of support as they anxiously wait for the delayed outcome of their cases.

For recent homicides, victims’ families are still being contacted by Baltimore Police advocates and the Baltimore City SAO staff, who are also following up with these families directly and assisting by coordinating with funeral homes and other outreach services to provide support the victims’ families. Victim and Witness Services staff are also assisting with applications for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and emailing any correspondence to include resources depending on the recipient’s needs.

Some families have elected to be in communication with therapists at the Baltimore City SAO’s Family Bereavement Center. The center’s virtual presence ensures continued mental health support services during the pandemic. The Bereavement staff has had extensive internal discussions to review protocols, HIPPA, and ethical boundaries as it pertains to those in virtual therapy.

The Baltimore City SAO remains committed to supporting victims and witnesses of violence, especially during this uncertain time. As courts gradually begin to reopen, staff will continue to host virtual meetings, rather than in-person meetings, with victims and witnesses whenever possible. When in-person meetings are necessary, victims and witnesses will be provided with personal protection equipment.

Baltimore City SAO will also assist victims and witnesses with court-related transportation needs pursuant to funding availability.

Even during this difficult time it is important to remember you are not alone, together we are stronger.
Assistant State’s Attorneys Achieve Significant Convictions and Sentences

The Baltimore City SAO’s prosecutors continue to have major success in the courtroom by keeping some of the City’s most violent offenders off the streets. February’s high-profile cases secured a total of four life sentences plus 205 years, as well as numerous convictions that are scheduled to be sentenced later in the year.

Four Life Sentences

PLUS 205 Years

SECURED

- At the beginning of February, Willard Turner was sentenced to life plus 80 years for the abduction and murder of 29-year-old Tiffany Jones. ASA Traci Robinson prosecuted this case.
- On February 19, Jordan Moody was sentenced to life plus 35 years for a shooting outside of Robbie’s Nest bar on E. North Avenue that took the life of Keith Patterson and endangered numerous other innocent bystanders. Division Chief of the Major Investigations Unit, Patrick Seidel, prosecuted this case.
- Shawn Battle was sentenced to 30 years suspending 15 and five years’ probation in the shooting death of Christopher Sutton. Battle pleaded guilty to manslaughter and use of a firearm in the commission of a violent crime. Assistant State’s Attorney Daniel Kim was co-counsel on the case.
- At the beginning of March, Keith Davis Jr. was sentenced to 50 years by Judge Sylvester Cox for the murder of Pimlico security guard Kevin Jones. The Major Investigations Unit Division Chief, Patrick Seidel, prosecuted this case.
- De’Andre Sleet was sentenced to life plus 25 years with the first 10 years to be served without the possibility of parole in the death of Riverside resident Timothy Moriconi. Assistant State’s Attorneys Bethany Durand and Megan Gallo prosecuted this case.
- On February 21, Ruben Jackson Jr. was found guilty of second-degree murder in the use of a handgun and the commission of a crime of violence after killing his father, Ruben Jackson Sr. Assistant State’s Attorney Jeffrey Maylor prosecuted the case.
- At the end of February, a Baltimore City jury found Anderson Covel guilty of first-degree murder, using a handgun in the commission of a crime of violence, and being a disqualified person in possession of a regulated firearm. He faces a maximum sentence of life plus thirty five years. Assistant State’s Attorney David Owens prosecuted this case.
- A Baltimore City jury found Dayon Cooper guilty of first-degree murder and using a handgun in a crime of violence, in addition to reckless endangerment and wear/carry/transport of a handgun. Cooper shot and killed victim Cameron Anderson on Cedonia Avenue. Assistant State’s Attorneys Bethany Durand and Alyssa Ragland prosecuted the case.

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State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby has always been clear that her prosecutors will place justice over convictions. Nonetheless, in March, State’s Attorney Mosby released 10 years’ of data compiled by the office in response to a number of recent inaccurate statements on the office’s conviction rate that needed to be clarified. In a letter to Senate President Bill Ferguson, the State’s Attorney provides data that refutes the erroneous perception that violent offenders aren’t convicted in Baltimore City. The felony conviction rate for the office was 90 percent in 2019 alone. The 10 year data reveals that the office has continued to perform at the same high level as it did under other State’s Attorney administrations, despite facing monumental challenges including the GTTF corruption scandal, numerous changes in leadership in the Mayor’s Office and in the Baltimore Police Department, the uprising after the death of Freddie Gray, and the Justice Department’s consent decree after finding a pattern and practice of discrimination within the police force.

“I cannot, and will not, tolerate the spread of fallacies about the performance of my assistant state’s attorneys when they continue to pursue justice in the face of large caseloads, uncooperative witnesses, and complex cases. They work with objectivity, diligence, and resolve to pursue justice for the citizens of Baltimore. I am proud of the work they do and I will continue to support them” — State’s Attorney Mosby

to Senate President Bill Ferguson, the State’s Attorney provides data that refutes the erroneous perception that violent offenders aren’t convicted in Baltimore City. The felony conviction rate for the office was 90 percent in 2019 alone.

To view the 10-year data, click here.