**Fair Compensation for Maryland Exonerees: How You Can Help**

**Getting Started**

* [**Sign up**](https://www.innocenceproject.org/maryland-action-compensation/) **for action alerts** on Maryland exoneree compensationto connect directly with your state lawmakers by phone, Twitter and email.
* **Find your state senator and state delegate** [**here**](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Members/District). The links will give you their phone numbers and email addresses. ***\*There are 3 delegates per district, 1 senator per district\****

**Maryland Statehouse 101**

* **Process:** The Maryland state legislature is composed of the state Senate and House of Delegates.
	1. Bill Introduced: Lawmaker files bill and it receives a number.
	2. Committees: The Maryland State Senate and House of Delegates are organized into committees that focus on specific issue areas. Committees hold public hearings and vote on bills
	3. Full House/Senate Vote: If a bill passes all assigned committees, it must be approved by the full Senate and House of Delegates—twice- before going to the governor for approval or veto.
* **Key Committees**. It’s helpful to know if your state senator or delegates are members of the committees that will be voting on exoneree compensation: [Senate Judicial Proceedings](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Committees/Details?cmte=jpr) and [House Judiciary](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Committees/Details?cmte=jud). Click on links to see committee membership.
* **The real work happens BEFORE legislative session**: The real work of educating lawmakers and building momentum for a successful bill happens before session. The coming months are the ideal time to contact your lawmakers.

**Effectively Communicating with Lawmakers**

* **Personalized communications**—**phones & in-person meetings—have the most impact** *(during COVID-19 pandemic in-person meetings may not be possible)***.** Generic mass emails with the same cut and pasted text have the lowest impact. Lawmakers and staff assume their constituents really care about an issue if they take the time to engage in personalized outreach.
* **Keep the message clear & concise:** The most important message to lawmakers and their staff is: *I live in your district, and fixing the exoneree compensation law is important to me. Will you support legislation to improve compensation for the wrongfully convicted?”* Adding your own story about what inspired you to act. Did you hearing an exoneree speak? Read about their story in the newspaper?

***\*\*NOTE: Bill numbers will be assigned when the legislative session begins in 2021. During the session lawmakers/staff may ask for a bill number, but prior to session you can refer to the issue of “exoneree compensation.”***

* **Power in numbers**. The more that lawmakers hear about an issue, the more likely they are to act. Remind your lawmaker a few times before and during session that you care about fixing the exoneree compensation law. Amplify your impact by asking family, friends, and local civic groups to contact their state lawmakers in support of fixing Maryland’s exoneree compensation law. Sign up for [**action alerts**](https://www.innocenceproject.org/maryland-action-compensation/)to let other Marylanders know what they can do to help.