

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Bill Ferguson., President
Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
February 1, 2021

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**PRESIDENT FERGUSON AND SPEAKER JONES ANNOUNCE
RACIAL IMPACT STATEMENT PILOT PROJECT**

ANNAPOLIS, MD – Senate President Bill Ferguson and Speaker of the House Adrienne A. Jones today announced a pilot project to conduct racial impact statements as a part of legislative analysis for the Maryland legislature.

Maryland will be the fourth state in the country to conduct this type of legislative analysis, following Connecticut, Iowa and New Jersey. Florida, Oregon and Minnesota have conducted outside reviews on select types of bills.

“There is finally a broader understanding across Maryland and the country of the existence of structural racism – but we have to have better and deeper information in order to reverse its impact,” said Speaker Jones. “I am pleased that the Maryland General Assembly is leading in this area and I’m hopeful that it will lead to better decision making and policy decisions in the coming years. I want to thank Delegate Jazz Lewis for his tireless effort over the last several years to make this happen.”

During the 2021 legislative session, the Department of Legislative Services will work with Bowie State University and the University of Baltimore Schaefer Center to compile the data needed to complete the nonpartisan racial impact analysis related to major criminal justice reform legislation. The information will be available to the members of the Maryland General Assembly and the public to consider during policy debates.

“Undoing issues of systemic inequity requires us to develop intentional strategies for measuring and combating disparate impacts. We do not add to the legislative evaluation process lightly, but we must have a better picture of the racial impact of proposed legislation,” stated Senate President Ferguson. “This is an important step forward, and it will provide a more holistic picture of the effect of legislation proposed and debated by the General Assembly. Communities of color deserve our best effort to ensure fairness in the legislative process.”

The Department of Legislative Services has created an internal staff team to work with the racial impact data compiled by Maryland universities. The racial impact statements will be provided in

addition to the regular fiscal analysis on the bills selected for the first phase of implementation this year.

"Racial impact statements recognize that our criminal justice system has disproportionately affected low-income and minority communities and will provide the legislature with a clearer picture of the cost of sentencing, parole, probation, and penalty charges," said Delegate Jazz Lewis. "I am elated Speaker Jones and Senate President Ferguson have worked with me to ensure that we can review our criminal justice-related legislation from a racial equity lens."

"The review of selected legislation with a focus on racial impact is concept whose time has come," said Senate President Pro Tem Melony G. Griffith. "The information provided under this project will allow the General Assembly to make informed data-based decisions when it comes to the racial impact of the legislation before the General Assembly. I appreciate President Ferguson and Speaker Jones's work to ensure the General Assembly will be better equipped to address criminal justice issues."

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