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TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER REGARDING:

House Bill H7280

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE—BAIL AND RECOGNIZANCE

Chairwoman Hagan McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender **supports** H7280, which proposes the establishment of a task force to analyze whether monetary conditions of bail should continue to be used and to assess the availability of alternatives to monetary bail that would be effective in ensuring an accused's appearance in court.

Our state has made significant progress in advancing bail reform, most notably by eliminating cash bail in most cases. The creation of this task force would be a positive next step to build on that momentum, making sure that the transition away from monetary bail is both effective and sustainable. Monetary bail was originally used as a mechanism to ensure that people return for court proceedings; however, in practice it often results in the prolonged detention of low-income individuals who pose little to no flight risk or threat to public safety, while wealthier defendants can secure their release regardless of risk. The use of monetary bail therefore disproportionately impacts marginalized communities and undermines the principles of equal justice.

This bill represents a thoughtful step toward a more just and effective pretrial system. By examining our current practices and exploring viable alternatives, the task force can provide meaningful recommendations rooted in data and public interest. This approach does not advocate for the wholesale elimination of pretrial accountability but rather seeks to ensure that our policies reflect modern values, research, and best practices.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to support H7280.

Sincerely,

/s/ Angela M. Yingling

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Legislative Liaison

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