

Upper Marlboro, MD
District Court Trial Session
July 29, 2022

Today, I was in Courtroom 262B. The Judge was LaKeecia Allen. Adam Trombly was the ASA. There was a defense attorney I had not seen in court before. He is familiar with another court watching group in Maryland. We had a long discussion after the court session was over, in which he spoke of cases he has been involved in where some people have used the system of civilian complaints to harass and incarcerate those they bear a grudge against, without a modicum of investigation before the innocent are sent to jail.

There were thirty cases. Of the 30 cases, 12 were nolle prossed, 11 were continued, 4 resulted in bench warrants, 2 loved ones prayed jury trials, and 1 pleaded guilty.

In the case of Mr. G, one of the arresting officers was Officer Black, 2714, who is on the "Do Not Call" list. Mr. G did not appear in court and a bench warrant was issued. After the court session, I told the defense attorney that Officer Black was on the "Do Not Call list." The attorney was aware of the "Do Not Call list," and made a note of it.

Another case, involving Ms. H, involved a single charge of 2nd Degree Escape. ASA Trombly said that Ms. H had cut off her ankle monitor and left her home on January 13, 2022. She was captured on April 21, and has been in jail ever since. She was brought in from the jail in the usual demeaning orange jumpsuit that has written on the back "Inmate Prince George's County Jail." She is 31 years old. She agreed to plead guilty and was then sentenced to serve time until August 17, when she will be released to a year of unsupervised probation. Judge Allen then ordered all fees waived.

The ASA and the court seemed satisfied that justice had been done. At that point, Panel PD Kafka told the court that Ms. H had given birth to a baby on January 1, 2022, when she was wearing the ankle monitor. The baby was ill and remained in the hospital. On January 13, Ms. H was at home wearing the ankle monitor and received a call that she needed to provide a lease shortly. Somehow, the requirement of a lease seemed to involve her not being able to have her baby, so she "panicked," she told her attorney, cut off her monitor, and went to the hospital to see her baby. For this, she was captured on April 21, and has been incarcerated ever since. Her child is in the custody of her aunt.

I spoke to the attorney after the hearing about this case. He said that, if Ms. H had had the money to have a “dedicated lawyer,” her lawyer could have petitioned the judge to allow her to go to the hospital without violating her ankle monitor restrictions. But, the attorney said, people who lack the means to hire a dedicated lawyer often do not realize they can have some of the restrictions modified and they resort to desperate measures. And so Ms. H has been imprisoned since April 17, because she was desperate to see her infant, and will, according to the attorney, remain in prison until August 17.

This case bothers me. What can we do about such state-sanctioned cruelty?