

Act to prevent the great evils arising by the Importation of Convicts into this Province and for the better Discovery of such when Imported

Whereas the great Number of Convicts of late years Imported into this Province have not only Committed several Murders Burglaries and other Felonies but Debauched the Minds and Principles of several of the ignorant and formerly Innocent Inhabitants thereof so far as to induce them to Commit several of the like Crimes the Importation whereof are now become so Common and frequent that honest People are very Injured in their lives or Properties and Whereas the greater Part of the Magistrates Time is taken up in the Royal Prosecution of the said Convicts and their Followers by the great Delay of all their Business and the Inconvenient Expence of the Country which Wills are in a great measure occasioned by the Magistrates or Owners of such Convicts not taking Care to keep them within due Bounds and restraining them from Injuring their Neighbours for Recovery whereof

Be it Enacted by the Right Honourable the Lord Proprietor by & with the Advice and Consent of his Lordships Governour and the Upper and Lower houses of Assembly and the Authority of the same That every Inhabitant of this Province that hereafter shall buy any Convict Servant shall be & is by this Act Obliged within Twenty Days after the Publication hereof or purchase of such Convict Servant to give and Enter into Recognizance in the Sum of Thirty pounds Current Money of Maryland before some Justice of the Peace or County Court for the good Behaviour of such Convict Servant for the space of One whole Year from the Date of such Recognizance which Recognizance is to be renewed yearly and every Year during the Term of the Service of such Convict Servant and to be returned by the several Magistrates taking the same to the County Courts respectively where the Persons requiring same to be by him taken upon Record - And Be it Enacted by the Authority aforesaid that any Person that shall hereafter buy any Convict Servant that shall neglect or refuse to give a Recognizance according to the Direction of this Act by the Space of Twenty Days after the publication thereof or purchase of such Convict Servant and renew the same Recognizance yearly as aforesaid shall forfeit the Sum of four thousand pounds of Tobacco One half to the Lord Proprietor for and towards Defraying the Publick Charge of this Province the other half to the Informer or him that will sue for the same to be recovered by Action of Debt Bill Plaintiff or Information whereon no Escoyn Protection or Wager of Law shall be Allowed And to the End that it may be known whom & to whom any Convict Servants are Sold

Be it Enacted that every Person having the Sale of any such Convict Servants within this Province shall be and is hereby Obliged to make Oath or Affirmation of a Truth before one Justice of the Provinciall or County Court within Six Days after such Sale of the time of the Sale of such Convict Servant and to whom sold which Deposition or Affirmation shall be by such Magistrate Transmitted to the Clerk of the County who is hereby Obliged to Enter the same on Record with Eight pence or reward And that an Implication of such Deposition or Affirmation shall be received as Evidence to prove the fact therein contained And that the person Selling such Convicts and Neglecting to Do what is by this Act required shall forfeit Twenty thousand pounds of Tobacco to the use aforesaid to be recovered as aforesaid And for the better Discovery of Convict Servants Be it Enacted that every Master of a Ship or other Vessel that shall hereafter Import any Servants into this Province shall be Obliged at the Time of the Entry of his Ship or other Vessel as aforesaid to declare upon Oath or Affirmation (if a Quaker which the Navall Officer of the Port is by this Act Impowered to Administer) whether he knows of any Convicts Among the Servants by him Imported and to give a List of their Names to the Navall Officer to be by him Transmitted to the Clerk of the County Court within Twenty Days after the Entry of such Ship or other Vessel to be taken upon Record And that every Master of a Ship that shall refuse to make Oath or Affirmation according to the Directions of this Act shall forfeit One hundred & fifty pounds Sterling for the use aforesaid to be recovered as aforesaid And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid by & with the Advice and Consent aforesaid that every Magistrate taking any Recognizance or Deposition in pursuance to the Direction of this Act shall for every Recognizance or Deposition by him so taken have and receive from the person entering into such Recognizance or causing such Deposition to be taken as aforesaid the Sum of five shillings Current Money of Maryland as a fee or reward for the same to be paid by the Purchaser or Owner of such Convict Servant

October the 1<sup>st</sup> 1723  
Read and Approved by the Lower house of Assembly & signed for them  
Wm. Mason & Co. Secy.

October the 26<sup>th</sup> 1723  
On behalf of his Rt Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Lord Proprietary of this Province  
I will this be a Law  
Cha: Calvert

October the 1<sup>st</sup> 1723  
Read and Approved by the Upper house of Assembly and signed for them  
Samuel Skippon Secy.