



Testimony

SB 682 – Pre-Release Unit for Women – Requirement to Operate

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Baltimore Women United (BWU) urges this committee's favorable report for **SB 682 – Pre-Release Unit for Women – Requirement to Operate**.

BWU activates women as voters, constituents, candidates and donors. BWU started in 2016 after the presidential election and educates women on important issues, motivates them to take action, and plays a role in electing candidates who support our issues. BWU is an all-volunteer group organizing major actions to further women's equality in Baltimore and in Maryland, whose leadership is predominantly women of color.

SB 682 requires the Department of Corrections to create a pre-release unit for women. Current law states that the Department may create the pre-release unit. The Department had a pre-release unit in Baltimore City but was closed when the Administration closed the Baltimore jail. The Department says they currently provide similar services at the women's prison in Jessup.

There are seven (7) pre-release units for men, there are zero (0) for women. This is unfair. Women need specific units for them to prepare for re-entry into regular life. This is a fairness and Title IX issue. Women need and deserve the same services and treatment as men.

Women have specific needs in order to transition into regular life. They need jobs and training and preparation just like anyone else, and they need that time to transition to very important roles of mom in some cases. Just providing pre-release services where the rest of the population is does not help.

While the cost for creating a separate pre-release unit for women is high, according to the fiscal note, since there already was a pre-release unit for women at one time, we believe the Department can work with the Governor to shift funds back into the budget for this purpose.

We urge your support for this important legislation.

Respectfully Submitted:

Odette Ramos and Denise Gilmore, Co-Chairs, Baltimore Women United