
Kimberly Haven

February 18, 2020

Chairman Clippinger
Vice Chair Atterbeary
Members of the House Judiciary Committee

SB 608 – Prerelease Unit for Women - Operate
Position: SUPPORT

My name is Kimberly Haven and I am in support of HB 608.

As one of the leading criminal justice advocates in our State, I urge this committee to support this legislation. Under current law, DPSCS is statutorily authorized, though not required, to operate a prerelease unit for women. Further, they must develop comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease services for women – however, we know that this is not happening.

DPSCS has announced an intention to redeploy a closed facility in Jessup to serve as a prerelease unit for both men and women – This is exceptionally problematic for a number of reasons:

1. In a review of the Governors fiscal 2021 proposed budget, there is not funding allocated for this facility.
2. Men are afforded an additional prerelease unit, and women are still without one
3. It's location in Jessup is not conducive in any way to affording women the opportunity to transition and return to their communities.
4. There are limited to no work opportunities nearby – the few that might be able to be secured, do not offer long-term employment prospects when a woman is released back to her community at the conclusion of her sentence
5. It does not meet the transition and “comprehensive rehabilitative services” for women

The list goes on – all of these issues only serve to support both the need for and the demand for a separate facility solely for women.

Currently, women are the fastest growing segment of our prison population – they are also the fastest growing segment returning home. Baltimore City is “ground-zero” for these women – it is where the largest number of women are coming from as well as where the largest number will return to.

In order for a woman to navigate the return back to her community, there must opportunities for employment, family reunification, education, community relationships, faith community engagement, counseling, health and drug treatment – all back in the community where she will return.

Brockbridge will not and cannot accomplish nor provide these essential elements of reentry and to accept that these elements are being met at MCI-W is ill-informed.

Women must not continue and will not continue to be correctional afterthoughts –

I urge a favorable report on HB 608.

Respectfully,
Kimberly Haven