

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0608

Correctional Services–Prerelease Unit for Women– Requirement to Operate

To: Chairman Luke Clippenger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Rebecca Gardner-Rhudy Prison Ministry Volunteer

Date: 2/12/2020

Dear Chairman and members of the committee:

I urge you to give a positive report to HB0608 which would mandate for incarcerated women the same reentry services that are available to incarcerated men.

Pre-release programs can help returning citizens successfully reenter the community, thereby reducing the likelihood of recidivism and sparing society the cost of repeated criminal behavior. In the long run pre-release programs save money, make our communities safer as these services provide essential support for individuals who have been "put away" and are now in need of help in putting their lives back together as they try to enter our communities in a constructive manner.

As the name suggests "correction" of undesirable behavior is a primary objective of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. It is fair and civil to give people some help in finding a job, finding housing and medical services and remaking their life so that they are encouraged to exhibit corrected behavior after they have completed their time of punishment.

In order for an incarcerated person to make the challenging transition from prison culture to the outside community they need support and pre-release programs can supply some of this vital support. As a Quaker who volunteered in prison ministry for nine years, I can attest to the importance of support for a person making the transition from prison community to the outside community. I and my fellow volunteers have witnessed the benefits that pre-release programs provide our guys and we are most grateful for all the state-sponsored and non-profit programs that have helped them acclimatize to the changing outside world.

There are presently zero reentry service centers for women. How can there be over 8 such facilities for men and none for women in Maryland when pre-release preparation is such a pivotal time in their lives?

Please consider a positive report for HB0608 which would provide much needed pre-release services to women who are about to have a chance at a new life.

Thank you for all your hard work on behalf of the citizens and communities of Maryland.

God bless us all.

Sincerely,
Becca Gardner-Rhudy
Darlington Maryland