



After Release

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0608

Correctional Services- Prelease Unit for Women - Requirement to Operate

DATE: 2/14/20

Qiana Johnson

**Founder,
Executive
Director**

**4710 Auth Pl
2nd Floor**

**Camp Springs,
MD 20744**

240-845-4007

(cell)

qjohnson@lifeafterrelease.org

www.lifeafterrelease.org

My name is Qiana Johnson, I am in addition to being the Executive Director of Life After Release. I am a formerly incarcerated women, that spent 2 ½ years at the Maryland Correctional Facility for Women.

Security Threat: During my entire sentence I was classified as a minimum security inmate. However I was forced to be housed with Maximum security inmates. This was a clear breach of security. **Minimum security** is for **people** who are not a flight risk, and are due for release soon. The inmates have more freedom of movement. They are less likely to cause problems because they do not want to add time to their sentence. **Maximum security** prisons are where the most violent and dangerous inmates are **kept**. Since I was forced to be housed with Maximum security inmates I was treated like them and was consistently put in harms way.

Why Pre-Release Units are Important Mr. Chairman, I am submitting testimony about the importance of building and operating women's pre-release units in the state of Maryland. Since the 1970s, women's incarceration rates have risen across the country and in the state of Maryland. Their incarceration has had a negative effect not just on those behind bars but also on families and communities. It is in the best interests of the state to ensure that women who have been incarcerated are released from prison ready to secure employment, receive appropriate treatment and counseling, connect meaningfully with their children, and reintegrate effectively into their communities. I believe community-based pre-release center with evidence-based transitional services provide the best option for incarcerated women to achieve these objectives. Due to the fact that many women suffer from post traumatic syndrome from being human trafficked or suffered abuse at the hand of a man, this should not be coed operation.

For these reasons, I urge your committee to pass HB 0608 and invest in a community-based pre-release unit strategy for the state of Maryland. It's not just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do for the affected women and our state.

Sincerely,

[Qiana Johnson](#)

