

CHARLOTTE CRUTCHFIELD
Legislative District 19
Montgomery County

Judiciary Committee

Subcommittees

Family Law

Chair, Juvenile Law



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 25, 2020

Testimony in Support of House Bill 828

Corrections – Women’s Prerelease Unit – Requirements (Women’s Prerelease Equity Act)

- Good afternoon Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Judiciary Committee.
- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today in **SUPPORT** of House Bill 828 – Women’s Prerelease Equity Act.
- This legislation would provide the critical definitions for eligibility, structure, location and community access for incarcerated women assigned to the prerelease security level in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women.
- The bill also requires the Commissioner of Correction to determine where to place the prerelease unit for women based on the area where the largest percentage of likely returning citizens will be released.
- To further their transition back into the community, women should be given a chance to access community services and other opportunities that will help them with their acclimation.
- Participant eligibility for the prerelease unit should be offered to incarcerated women who are: (1) the least risk of violence; (2) least risk of escape; and (3) have obtained a record of satisfactory institutional behavior.
- Currently, prerelease security level women are living the in the general population with other incarcerated women, who are classified from minimum to maximum security levels. These women deserve to live in surroundings that match their security level and are separate and distinct from other security levels to avoid conflict.
- In simple terms, this legislation will provide guidelines and definition to the Commissioner of the Division of Correction on the structure, location, community access and participant eligibility for a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease facility for incarcerated women in Maryland.

I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 828.


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**Testimony in Support
Of**

House Bill 828-Women's Prerelease Unit-Requirements (Women's Prerelease Equity Act)

This legislation would provide the critical definitions for eligibility, structure, location and community access for incarcerated women assigned to the prerelease security level in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women.

The Commissioner of the Division of Correction has no clear guidelines for the structure, location or eligibility for a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease facility. A prerelease unit for women should be defined as a separate structure; located in a geographical location where the largest population of returning citizens will be released; and community access for participants.

Participant eligibility for the prerelease unit should be offered to incarcerated women who are: (1) the least risk of violence; (2) least risk of escape; and (3) have obtained a record of satisfactory institutional behavior.

Currently, prerelease security level women are living in the general population with other incarcerated women, who are classified from minimum to maximum security levels. This creates discord that can lead to further stress and trauma to women, who are within a few months to several years from release. These women deserve to live in surroundings that match their security level and are separate and distinct from other security levels.

Additionally, this separate structure should be located in a geographical location where the highest percentage of likely returning citizens will be released. Data indicates that community based facilities have lowered recidivism rates; therefore the prerelease unit should be located adjacent to or in close proximity to the zip codes where the majority of returning citizens will be released.

To further their transition and acclimation into the community, women should be given opportunities to access community services and other opportunities that will provide them with a smooth transition back into the community.

Simply put, this legislation will provide guidelines and definition to the Commissioner of the Division of Correction on the structure, location, community access and participant eligibility for a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease facility for incarcerated women in Maryland.

I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 828.

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February 25, 2020

Testimony in Support

Of

**House Bill 801-Prerelease Unit for Women-Facilities and Services
(Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act)**

This legislation would require the Commissioner of the Division of Correction to provide a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease facility for incarcerated women that matches their security level and has services therein that are evidence-based and gender-responsive.

Currently, incarcerated women who are identified to receive prerelease services must participate in services while living in the general population with other incarcerated women, who are classified from minimum to maximum security. This creates discord amongst the incarcerated populations that can lead to further stress and trauma to women, who are within a few months to several years from release. These women deserve to live in surroundings that match their security level because they are the: (1) the least risk of violence; (2) least risk of escape; and (3) have obtained a record of satisfactory institutional behavior.

The prerelease programs that are offered should also reflect the data and information that indicates the impact of such programs on recidivism. Because of the special needs of incarcerated women, the prerelease programs should be gender responsive and utilize community partnerships in order to reduce barriers in obtaining housing, jobs, education, health care, childcare and child welfare, transportation, legal advocacy, case management and other needs.

Simply put, this legislation would separate the incarcerated women classified under the prerelease security level from the general prison population and provide the prerelease services needed for their successful re-entry back into society.

I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 801.

Charlotte Crutchfield

Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield