



Maryland  
Justice  
Project

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB801**

### **Correctional Services - Prerelease Unit for Women - Facilities and Services Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act**

**To: Chairman Luke Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee**

**From: Monica Cooper Maryland Justice Project, Founder**

**Date: 2/25/2020**

Dear Chairman and members of the committee

The Maryland Justice Project would like to ask for your support on **HB801**

### **Correctional Services - Prerelease Unit for Women - Facilities and Services Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act.**

Our organization work with Women and Girls Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated, in fact many of us are directly impacted and once found ourselves on the opposite end of this issue awaiting re-classification and transfer to the Baltimore Pre-release Unit for Woman located at 301 Calverton road. As a former resident at MCIW I can recall the anxiety and excitement as my classification date to Pre-release status drew near. I was looking forward to getting therapy to deal with sexual abuse trauma, finally seeing a physician to ensure I was healthy, and most importantly getting a job and attending college. It is time for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that they are providing Gender Responsive services. It goes without saying that women's needs are different from men. Many of the women I encounter ended up in Prison because of a relationship with a man. Providing programming to help women choose healthier relationships, programming that help women reconnect with their children, job training and services that will allow women to get a job that can sustain her and her family. The pay gap for men and women are significant and the pay gap for a woman with a record is even bigger. Women can succeed without ever returning to prison but we have to give them the tools. We can no longer allow the Department of Corrections to spend out tax dollars on outdated ineffective programs. All of that stuff looks good on paper and most of what is on paper they do not provide, they currently have

inmates doing Narcotics Anonymous meetings, when the majority of the population are in prison using drugs as we speak. Today there has been more overdoses in MCIW than one can imagine. They don't report that. They need help. Good evidence based programming is what they need, programming tailored for women. Women exiting prison are expected to return to their children and help keep them from making the same mistakes. There is an overwhelming consensus that this bill and all efforts to ensure women are given the tools they need to return home and be better mothers and daughters are and should be a priority for all.

Thank you,  
Monica Cooper, Executive Director  
Maryland Justice Project