



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of the Secretary Office of Government and Legislative Affairs

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BILL: HOUSE BILL 828

POSITION: INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: This bill proposes to define “prerelease unit for women”, requires a prerelease unit for women in an area, defined by zip codes, where the largest percent of women are released to, and authorizes women residing in prerelease to have increased opportunities to interact in the communities to which they are returning.

COMMENTS:

- The Department’s Division of Correction (DOC) operates approximately 17 State correctional facilities, which house offenders sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also runs the Baltimore City Pretrial Complex, under the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services (DPDS), which houses pretrial detainees and inmates sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and less.
- The Department recently announced plans to repurpose Brockbridge Correctional Facility, which is located in Anne Arundel County, and utilize it as a dynamic prerelease and reentry facility for women and men.
- Identifying the former Brockbridge Correctional Facility as the location to redeploy a reentry facility is a cost-effective approach, as the facility has the space and design to implement reentry services for both females and males at a cost that can be effectively managed using the Department’s current budget.
- If the Department had to open a prerelease unit for women in Baltimore City, as this is the area in which the majority of female inmates were released to in 2019, the cost is projected to be over \$93,000,000 to include the construction of the facility, implementation of services, and hiring additional staff.
- The timeframe to build and open a prerelease facility for women in a zip code where the majority of women are released would be 3-5 years if it were fast-tracked; whereas, the Brockbridge prerelease facility is expected to be operational by December 2020. Knowing the Department is in the process of building a reentry program to serve all eligible inmates,

allows the staff to evaluate pre-entry services in all facilities throughout the State.

- The location in Jessup, presents incredible existing programming space as well as other opportunities to create a facility fully-dedicated to reentry programming, continued workforce development, education, work release, family mediation, and other essential programming.
- **In addition, requiring the Department to operate a prerelease unit in the location where the largest number of inmates will be released would require the construction of multiple units throughout the State, as the inmate population is always changing.**
- The Department adheres to best practices in the field of corrections and is developing a reentry facility that incorporates the best practices and recommendations of professional correctional organizations to include the American Correctional Association and the National Institute of Corrections.
- The facility will add new programs that are research and data driven, while expanding upon the services once available at the pre-release center for women, which was forced to close for budgetary reasons ten years ago.
- The Department will deploy direct supervision concepts that have proven highly successful and efficient in today's corrections and community corrections facilities.
- The space will support the separation of women and men within the same structure and will be designed to accommodate community programs that collaboratively align with the Department's strong re-entry focus.
- The Department has identified a cost-effective way to utilize existing space, thereby eliminating the need for new construction and the expenses associated with it, to provide a comprehensive reentry facility centrally located for the majority of the reentry population in the State.
- The Department's policies, practices, and procedures continue to change and evolve as science and evidence-based national best practices change and improve over time. It is imperative the Department's operations have the ability to remain nimble based on the ever-changing framework of the criminal justice arena. This bill would create a statutory mandate on an area in the criminal justice system that is similarly subject to change.

CONCLUSION: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates on House Bill 828.