



**Testimony of Ricarra Jones, Political Director of 1199SEIU
Pre-Release Services for Women
HB 608(SB 682); HB 828 (SB 683); HB801 (SB 684)
Position: Support
February 18, 2020**

1199SEIU Healthcare Workers East (1199SEIU) is the largest healthcare union in the country with, with over 450,000 members throughout Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida and Washington, D.C. **We fully support a state-run, stand-alone pre-release center for Maryland's incarcerated women.**

As evidenced by the facts below, treating women's incarceration as an afterthought has held back Maryland's efforts to reduce recidivism and incarceration costs:

1. The number of women incarcerated in state prisons remains stagnant, while the number of incarcerated men is falling;
2. Women need reentry support for the sake of their families: Nearly 75% of incarcerated women are primary caretakers of children, and 42% of mothers in state prisons may be single parents;
3. Pre-release facilities can prepare women to reintegrate back into society by providing access to job training, employment, community resources, and comprehensive re-entry planning assistance within a less restrictive and safe environment;
4. The state currently operates ZERO dedicated pre-release facilities for women, while operating several for men;
5. Women at the Maryland Correctional Institution (MCI-W) express fear for their safety as they try to focus on reentry planning. This fear is justified given they are housed alongside individuals who are

classified as maximum security. Additionally, the inmate assault rate at MCI-W is greater than the assault rates at both of the state-run pre-release facilities for men;

6. Women at MCI-W report that they do not feel prepared for their release due to a lack of support in planning for housing, employment, and other re-entry needs;

7. The per-capita cost for housing a woman at MCI-W is over \$13,000 more per year than the cost of housing a man at one of Maryland's stand-alone pre-release facilities for men; and

8. The Maryland General Assembly's Task Force on Re-entry (2011) emphasized the importance of supporting individuals in creating a comprehensive reentry plan and re-locating them to a separate facility several months prior to their release "where they would be closer to family and community resources that can provide them with important assistance."

The Maryland Legislative Task Force on Reentry and independent researchers have all come to the same conclusion: relocating individuals to a community-based setting in the months prior to their release and providing them with comprehensive services, increases the likelihood that they will successfully re-enter their communities and avoid future contact with the legal system. 1199SEIU supports Out for Justice and their partners in their call for equitable pre-release services for women in Maryland. **We, therefore, urge members of Maryland's General Assembly to pass HB0608 (SB 682), HB 828 (SB 683), and HB 801(SB 684).**