

February 25, 2020

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB828**  
**Corrections - Women's Prerelease Unit - Requirements (Women's Prerelease Equity Act)**

**TO:** Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Mark Paster

My name is Mark Paster and I am a resident of Silver Spring (District 20), Maryland. I am writing in support of HB828.

**“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”** Someday soon, hopefully, the Equal Rights Amendment will become part of US law. Many laws already exist that prohibit different treatment of men and women without sound reasons. And yet Maryland continues to have no pre-release facilities for women who are about to be released from incarceration, despite providing such programming for men. The legal justification for this lack of gender parity is non-existent and the State should not continue to assume that no one will sue the State for this obvious and indefensible discrimination.

Pre-release facilities have been shown to help lower recidivism, smooth integration back into families and the community and help people who have been incarcerated become more successful in their lives. In order to best accomplish this, however, it is vital for these facilities to be located near where the individuals will be returning so that they have the opportunity to renew and strengthen their bonds with family and community before being released. By locating the facility near where the women live they will have greater opportunity to secure jobs, needed medical and mental health care, and housing prior to their release.

A more just society includes treating everyone more justly and equitably. Providing women the same level of programming we currently offer men who are being released from incarceration and locating it near where they will be living, is simple justice. **I urge you to issue a favorable report on HB828.** Thank you.