



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 25, 2020**

**HB 828**

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

**House Judiciary Committee**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

House Bill 828 requires that the Commissioner of the Division of Correction operate a prerelease center for women in the state in a location where the largest percentage of women needing its services are likely to reenter back into the community.

It is imperative that all men and women have appropriate access to prerelease services to be able to successfully reenter their communities. Factors such as family reintegration, job or vocational training, and affordable housing are crucial to a person’s productive return, replacing the isolation of confinement with more positive supports. The combination of such factors ultimately leads to lower recidivism rates and better involvement in a person’s family and community life.

Women in particular are woefully underserved by prerelease centers in Maryland. Some centers, such as the Baltimore Prerelease Center for Women, have closed. There is currently an inadequate proportion of prerelease centers for women compared to the number that men have access to. This is an injustice to the future success of women in Maryland to have productive futures once they are released, especially as women often have unique needs to be addressed before returning to their communities.

While the Conference supports the creation of more prerelease centers for women, it also urges that these centers be placed throughout the state in areas that are near and easily accessible for those returning home, so that they may begin to readjust to life back in their own communities. House Bill 828 is a crucial first step in achieving that goal.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 828.