



Senate Bill 742
Maryland Model Prisons for Youthful Offenders Study Act
Judicial Proceedings
FAVORABLE

February 23, 2021

To the Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in support of SB742. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders.

In the 1990s, Maryland's state government in line with the federal government mistakenly believed that if our laws instilled policies that supported being "tough on crime" it would protect our society and lower crime rates. The public administration believed that for the sake of public safety, superfluous criminal codes, even for children needed to be implemented. And instead of prosperity for all, this brought forth an era that proliferated a prison pipeline. Instead of investing in Marylanders, providing opportunities for job training, restoration or rehabilitation lawmakers chose to criminalize men, women, and children. Under these policies, a [disproportionate amount of Black youth were incarcerated](#) and by 2019, Black youth represented 77% of the juvenile detention centers while white youth represented only 18%.

More recently, states have recognized that instead of exponentially increasing the prison population and keeping citizens incarcerated, the goal should be to help prepare incarcerated individuals for successful reentry so that they have opportunities upon release, and to reduce recidivism. Connecticut has piloted the [TRUE program](#), which is based on the rehabilitative principles of the prison system in Germany and the Netherlands. The TRUE program incorporates retraining of correctional staff, mentors, family involvement, counseling, and education programs. These programs are a second chance for individuals in a broken system.

We believe the state needs to undertake a Justice Reinvestment approach to Maryland's Juvenile Justice system and that SB742 could move Maryland in this direction. The era of "tough on crime" must end; policies that were tools to augment systemic racism must be

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replaced with initiatives that offer a fundamental change to our state prisons. Through the model prisons study workgroup, Maryland can begin the process of investing and examining restorative programs that would not only benefit incarcerated youth, but comprehensively benefit all Maryland citizens in every county and in every community.

We respectfully request a favorable report on SB742.

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland,

John B. King

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Founder & Board Chair

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