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# Kimberly Haven

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February 6, 2023

Chairman Will Smith  
Vice Chairman Jeff Waldstreicher  
Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee

Senate Bill 87 –  
Office of the Attorney General – Correctional Ombudsman  
**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kimberly Haven, and I am the Legislative Liaison for Interfaith Action for Human Rights and the Executive Director of Reproductive Justice Inside. *I offer this testimony in support of SB 87.*

I have testified before this committee and stated that “we can’t fight or address what we can’t see, and we can’t see what they don’t show us.” SB 87 provides a mechanism for the oversight of the Department of Public Safety that is both long overdue and needed. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that the Department, in addition to its new leadership, has made significant progress in certain areas of operation – however, there is more to do.

This is good legislation. With this legislation, Maryland is now ideally positioned to usher in a new framework of transparency and accountability under the new leadership of DPSCS. This legislation allows for holding our system up for investigation and scrutiny. Advocates, families, communities, and taxpayers need this impartial body to ensure that our facilities are safe, that they are well managed and that all its operations are transparent. This legislation would strengthen and support other legislation soon to come before this committee, particularly Restrictive Housing Reforms (The Maryland Mandela Act).

To have an impartial entity both responsible for oversight and empowered with the tools and resources to investigate will shine a bright light on the conditions and concerns that have only deepened over the years.

What is significant about this legislation is its objectivity. We are all aware of PRISM which in the past has been the response to complaints against the Department. This organization is totally funded by the State which is tantamount to the police policing themselves. Routinely, they are not responsive

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to complaints or concerns from those incarcerated in our prisons and are not required to respond to advocates and attorneys. Why would they when the State is their client?

This legislation is good policy. It will move Maryland in the right direction – the direction of transparency and accountability.

As I stated in my opening, we can't fight or address what we can't see, and we can't see what they won't show us. SB 87 will bring to light what we must address within our correctional system.

For these reasons and on behalf of Interfaith Action for Human Rights and Reproductive Justice Inside, ***I urge a favorable report on SB 87.***

Respectfully submitted,

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