

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

[www.womensdemocraticclub.org](http://www.womensdemocraticclub.org)

**Senate Bill 0187 – Correctional Services - Comprehensive Rehabilitative  
Prerelease Services - Female Incarcerated Individuals**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee – January 28, 2026**

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

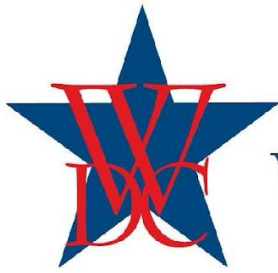
Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2026 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

**We urge swift passage, with suggested amendments, of SB187 Correctional Services - Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services - Female Incarcerated Individuals.** This bill will ensure that women incarcerated in Maryland are ready, when released, to build a future better than the past—for their children, families, and communities as well as themselves.

Women who have engaged in criminal behavior have a very different profile from that of men who have engaged in criminal behavior. Women tend to be older; have experienced multiple physical, sexual, or emotional traumas; and often end up encountering the criminal justice system as a direct result of their involvement with men. For this reason, pre-release services need to be gender-specific (i.e., tailored to women's unique needs), trauma-informed, and evidence-based.

The Gender-Responsive Pre-Release Act of 2021 required DPSCS to provide incarcerated women with those services in a pre-release facility of their own. Research indicates that providing comprehensive therapeutic services, education, job training, and family reunification lowers recidivism rates and helps women successfully move forward with their lives. Moreover, when women can get back on their feet, maintain employment, and successfully reunite with their children and families, they are able to give the next generation a fighting chance. Conversely, without gender-responsive, trauma-informed, evidence-based services, women's reintegration into their families and communities will be more challenging, with predictable negative downstream effects on the next generation.

Since late 2009, when the Baltimore Pre-Release Unit for Women was shuttered, women in pre-release status have had no dedicated facility where they can receive the gender-responsive, trauma-informed, evidence-based services they need. We estimate that at least 1500 women have been denied essential services since then. When we consider the negative effects on children and families, the number of lives affected has been multiplied manyfold. Since 2009, they have not received therapeutic programs, the ability to reunite and form bonds with their children, job training, jobs. Instead, as one formerly incarcerated woman testified, DPSCS staff dropped her off alone at a transit station, with nothing but \$50 and a bag of condoms.



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Maryland's incarcerated women need the pre-release center now. The lack of pre-release services affects every family and community into which a formerly incarcerated woman is released. Accordingly, for the reasons outlined in the The Women's Pre-Release Equity Coalition's written testimony, WDC strongly supports SB187 with these proposed amendments:

1. Remove the 1-mile radius restriction set forth in Section 3-301(b)(1)(II).
2. Add "MAXIMUM" between "1.25" and "TIMES" in Section 3-301(b)(2).
3. Add "AND SHALL BE FULLY TRANSFERRED TO SUCH FACILITY UPON COMPLETION OF FINAL CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION." to the end of Section 3-303(b)(2).
4. Add a new Subsection 3-303(b)(3) to require DPSCS to provide gender-responsive pre-release services at what DPSCS calls the Life Skills and Re-Entry Center for Women and prohibit DPSCS from requiring women to receive those services at a correctional facility housing men, at a correctional facility incarcerating individuals who are not eligible for pre-release status, or at a different correctional facility for women.
5. Restore the subtitle, "The Monica Cooper Prerelease Act."

Thanks to the action of this legislature in prior sessions, planning and design for the facility is fully funded. Passage of SB187 with the Coalition's proposed amendments will not affect the state's budget for three fiscal years.

WDC is grateful to the Maryland General Assembly for passing the Gender-Responsive Pre-Release Act in 2021 over Governor Hogan's veto, and we are equally appreciative that the General Assembly has staunchly insisted on full funding for the Women's Pre-Release Center since the Act passed. This Committee must not waver in that commitment.

**We urge a favorable Committee vote on SB187**, with the amendments proposed by the Women's Pre-Release Equity Coalition. We further urge this Committee to bring this legislation to a vote and to move the amended bill to the Budget and Taxation Committee as quickly as possible.

Maryland's incarcerated women have waited far too long for the facility and services they need for a successful transition back into their families and our communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Rubinstein  
WDC President

Kate Stein  
WDC Advocacy Chair