

Testimony In Support of HB1553 (SB0077)

By Pastor Roberto Hinds Jr.

Our correctional facilities should be equipped to facilitate and serve as a validating authority to the Department of Motor Vehicle in order to issue a valid "Real ID" to every returning citizen, upon their release from incarceration because of the following three reasons:

1. Correctional Facilities are one of the few institutions that is able to prove the identity of a person, as well as, certify with a high level of certainty, 99.9 percent certainty, that the individual(s) in their custody are the person he/she claim that they are—the facility is able to prove nonrepudiation
2. On October 2020 having a Real ID will be a Homeland Security Federal Mandate. Inmates returning to their communities will not be able to meet Federal Real ID Guidelines without the assistance of the correctional facilities that housed them
3. A Real ID and/or Drivers' License must be treated as an essential basic document, in order to gain employment. It should be our civil duty to ensure to both our communities and the individuals returning the facilitation of a valid ID comparable to Homeland Security Federal Mandated Real ID. Void of this ability to obtaining such a basic vital document and necessary ID, will lead to undue burden and stress on the individual returning to society which, most likely, will contribute to the increase in recidivism.

As a correctional institution survivor, now over thirty years, I have personally experienced the urgent need and importance of regaining a trustworthy identity and continuity to a normalized life within my community. Moreover, it is not just a matter of having any identification, but rather, to be a carrier of an ID that establishes credibility and an opportunity to be accepted back into society, without the initial prejudice and stigma associated with an ex-convict—a stigma producing an uncontrollable need to judge, if not, a fear of the holder carrying a correctional facility issued ID, stating, if not the obvious, I am in the presence of an ex-convict.

As a former Federal Government Contractor and Public Trust holder to several United States agencies such as Department of Labor (DOL), Federal Election Commission (FEC), Food & Drug Administration (FDA), as well as, Mine Safety & Health Commission, the need to have the basic identification documents: a drivers' license and a valid social security card was crucial to obtaining a Common Access Card (CAC)---without these form of identification, all further attempts at gaining employment, were considered a nonstarter.

Back then and more so now, and soon to be enforced by Homeland Security, a driver's license is considered an essential and valid ID, second to none, it is a real ID. Conversely, a correctional facility ID, is not a real ID; rather, it is a bullhorn announcing, "Warning, warning here before us stands a convict, proceed with grave caution."

Correctional Facilities are one of the few institutions that is able to prove the identity of a person

I have had the honor to serve my country, the United States of America and its Armed Forces and played a key role in the screening, readiness and deployment of our service men and women during the inception of Operation Desert Shield. More so, I am proud to say that I am an honorably discharged Army Veteran and, with great passion, continue to serve our communities as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a pastor. Also, I mentioned that I to, in an unfortunate turn of events, was once incarcerated. Having been part of both these very large institution (the military and correctional institutions), I can attest of the following: both these institutions, undisputedly, possesses with great certainty---99.9 percent certainty, the ability to attest and validate both the identity and personal data of an individual that has been part of its process—validating nonrepudiation of its members.

It is then this ability of proving nonrepudiation that stands as a strong argument in favor of requiring the Maryland Correctional Facilities, at the time of release, to facilitate, along with DMV, every individual a valid Real ID comparable to Homeland Security Federal guidelines. Anything of lesser probative value, than that of an Homeland Security Real ID, would be an attempt at shirking our responsibilities to both the individual reentering our communities, and to society itself to whom we owe, at a minimum, to prove, if not, guarantee the identity of those we are releasing into our communities.

On October 2020 having a Real ID will be a Homeland Security Federal Mandate

October 2020 is quickly approaching; thus, the need to be a carrier of a Federal mandated Real ID, will no longer be an option but a must. This Federal mandate will require presenting several types of documents as proof of identity in order to obtain a Real ID. Documents such as original Social Security Card (no copy), Birth Certificate, Passport, bill statement displaying the person's permanent address and full name, etc. Not one of our incarcerated returning citizens will be able to obtain a Federal mandated Real ID because not one of them will have all the primary necessary documents, much less, provide a bill statement with a permanent address with their full name. Pretty much, I predict come October 2020, recidivism will begin to increase because we will have incarcerated citizens reentering our communities that will not have the means or ability to obtain the required documents needed to prove real identity, much less gain employment.

A Real ID and/or Drivers' License must be treated as an essential basic document to gain employment

The only solution to the inability to obtain the Federal mandated Real ID by our returning citizens, is to institute a partnership with DMV and the correctional institutions to issue a Real ID to our returning citizens. We must treat Real ID as a basic document that is able to gain us employment and essential to becoming a viable member of society. As it stands, we are now beginning to refer to the drivers' license as a "Universal Identification," should our returning

citizens not be included in this universe? The correctional facility, like the United States Armed Forces, is the only other institution that can validate who these returning citizens are, with a 99.9 percent accuracy and certainty. What better time to prove our incarcerated identity but right at the time of their release?

In conclusion, we should endeavor our correctional facilities to begin within six months to a year, prior to the release of an inmate—as a form of corrective measure, since they are a correctional facility, to begin the process of facilitating obtaining basic vital civil registrar documents for each incarcerated individual. This will be instrumental in validating their identity and serve as proof for Homeland Security documentation requirement leading up to the issuance of a Real ID by DMV, at the state level.