



Testimony for the House Environment and Transportation Committee

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HB 1553 Identification Cards and Driver's License Renewals - Inmates

FAVORABLE

YANET AMANUEL
PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCATE

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
OF MARYLAND

MAIN OFFICE
& MAILING ADDRESS
3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD
SUITE 350
BALTIMORE, MD 21211
T/410-889-8555
or 240-274-5295
F/410-366-7838

FIELD OFFICE
6930 CARROLL AVENUE
SUITE 610
TAKOMA PARK, MD 20912
T/240-274-5295

WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS
JOHN HENDERSON
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS SHELLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1553, which requires the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to issue identification cards and driver's license renewals for inmates upon their release.

In Maryland, upon request, on the day of her release, an inmate is given an ID card, which can be used, along with a birth certificate, to obtain a state-issued ID at the MVA.¹ An MOU between DPSCS and the MVA also allows individuals to obtain an MVA ID card at a cost of \$2, if purchased within 60 days after their release.² However, lack of transportation and the process of obtaining important documents, such as birth certificates and social security cards, especially for those individuals who have been incarcerated for many years, can be daunting and prohibitively challenging. Worse, the failure to obtain these documents quickly can doom a returning Marylander's chances of successfully reintegrating into their community.³

Even if a person without identification is fortunate enough to find work, the lack of a state ID can make it extremely difficult to cash paychecks or open a bank account. These barriers increase the likelihood that individuals with criminal records will fail in their attempts to reenter society.

¹ "State by State Breakdown of ID Laws." *Gjp.org*, Georgia Justice Project, 2017, www.gjp.org/wp-content/uploads/GJP-Breakdown-of-State-ID-Laws-1E.pdf.

² "SB 77 Fiscal Note." *Maryland General Assembly*, Department of Legislative Services, 2020, mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/fnotes/bil_0007/sb0077.pdf.

³ "SECURING OFFICIAL IDENTIFICATION FOR INDIVIDUALS LEAVING PRISONS AND JAILS." *Advocacy Toolkit - Securing Official Identification for Individuals Leaving Prisons and Jails*, Legal Action Center, lac.org/toolkits

Ensuring that people released from prison or jail are able to immediately obtain proper state ID cards will remove some of the barriers to successfully reentering back into the community. Research shows that the first few weeks after release are critical to successful reentry and preventing recidivism.⁴ Thus, it is crucial that this transition be made as smooth as possible. Easing the process of obtaining identification is an inexpensive and common-sense step toward supporting former inmates in making a successful transition back into society.⁵

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland supports HB 1553.

⁴ Soloman , Amy L, and Jenny W.L Osborne . "Life After Lockup." *Ncjrs*, 2008, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/220095.pdf.

