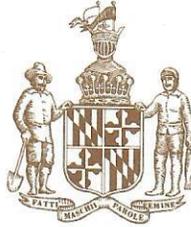


TONY BRIDGES
Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

RE: Support For HB1553 (Identification Cards and Driver's License for Inmates)

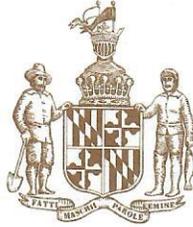
Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the committee of Environment and Transportation. Thank you for allowing me to present my testimony for bill HB1553. This bill aims to address one of the most relevant barriers to successful re-entry of prisoners released from jails, prisons and correctional facilities. It calls for these facilities to ensure that before release inmates are in possession of an MVA issued Real ID card. While the current law allows correctional facilities to issue an ID, it is hardly as effective as the MVA ID in allowing them a successful re-entry and performance of daily activities.

Men and women who are released from prison need the support of the state and the community in order to build a life for themselves. In several instances, they have to be re-acclimatized to society and for this to happen, we need to address any barriers of process that they face. Lack of a Real ID is one of the most crucial barriers inmates face upon release. The challenges upon not getting an ID include difficulty of access to public services and facilities, getting loans – student or housing, starting businesses, entering federal or state buildings, travelling out of state, among several others. As a result these individuals are stuck in a situation in which they cannot perform daily activities or be gainfully employed, making it exceedingly difficult for them to start anew. Currently inmates are provided a Department of Corrections card which does not give them the much-needed credibility to get employed or even to access regular services, widening the disparities between them and society. These cards are temporary and short lived solutions that should be removed altogether. We propose that the process of ID card issuance should be initiated 3 months in advance to achieve this goal of getting an ID at the time of release.

In order to get the ID in hand, we also have to tackle other challenges – like securing all essential documents needed for an ID to be issued. To address these issues, House Bill 1463 by Delegate

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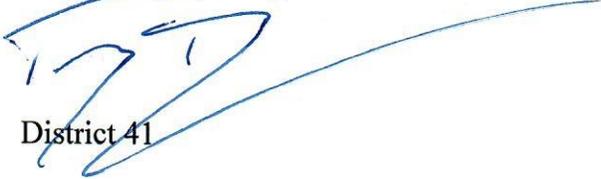
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Feldmark proposes facilitating acquisition of the social security card and birth certificates before release, which will iron out some of the other issues in getting an ID.

With minimal costs to the state and local jurisdiction, we believe that this bill will be a great help in rehabilitating millions who are released from local and state prisons. It will pave the way for these individuals to start a new life out of prison with respect and dignity by removing the first barrier they face upon release.

I humbly request a favorable report.

Tony Bridges, Delegate



District 41