



**COMMISSION FOR WOMEN  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLUSTER**

February 27, 2020

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 682 Correctional Services - Prerelease Unit for Women - Requirement to Operate

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Montgomery County Commission for Women ("Commission") strongly supports Senate Bill 682 and urges the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill. SB 682 requires the Commissioner of Correction to operate a prerelease unit for women within the Division of Correction (DOC).

The DOC currently administers prerelease operations throughout the State correctional system identified as re-entry programs. All inmates due for release participate in transition planning. Until fiscal 2017, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) operated a prerelease unit for women in Baltimore City; however, the facility is now closed. After the facility closed, all prerelease programming for women was transferred to the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup, where the women are housed throughout the facility. The current pre-release system for women is neither equitable nor justifiable. Women involved with the criminal justice system deserve the same rehabilitative pre-release services as men, including their own stand-alone facility. Maryland currently has 9 separate "brick and mortar" pre-release centers for men and NONE for women. A stand-alone center with appropriate and comprehensive services can strengthen support for female offenders by:

- Providing cognitive programs that can be implemented without any distractions;
- Equipping women with the tools needed to assist them with community living and family reunification. This will reduce challenges and burdens faced when reunifying with the community; and
- Creating a secure environment outside of a prison setting that meets the unique needs of female offenders while offering wraparound services that include transitional housing case management, drug and alcohol support and other services necessary to navigate re-integration. These services are already being provided to men on a much larger scale.

Equity for female offenders is critical if we want to reduce recidivism and work towards an individual's success upon release. Fairness is key not only for those being released, but for their families as well as the community.

The Commission is charged by law to advise the County Executive, County Council, the public, and county, state and federal government agencies on issues of concern to women. One of our strategic priorities is to advocate for laws that support justice-involved women. This bill furthers our goal and we urge this Committee's support of this bill.

Sincerely,



Nicole Y. Drew, Esq.  
President  
Montgomery County Commission for Women

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