



# Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

Bill No: Senate Bill 682  
Title: Correctional Services - Prerelease Unit for Women - Requirement to Operate  
Committee: Judicial Proceedings  
Hearing Date: February 26, 2020  
Position: SUPPORT

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The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW's purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **Senate Bill 682 is a priority on the 2020 MLAW Agenda.**

MLAW supports Senate Bill 682 because this bill would require, instead of authorizing, the commissioner to operate a prerelease unit for women.

In 2009 the Department of Corrections shut down the one and only Pre-release Center for Women and sent the participants back to the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW). To this day D.O.C is trying to run a Pre-Release Center for Women inside a Maximum Security Facility from prison cells. This essentially does not fit the criteria of a Pre-release Center and it is Discriminatory on its face. There are 9 separate Brick and Mortar Pre-Release Centers for Men and Zero for Women. Every human being released from incarceration should have the same opportunities and access to programs and jobs which are put in place for individuals to have a successful re-entry to the community. This is an equity issue, a title IX issue and a gender discrimination issue. Women deserve the same opportunity to heal become whole and return to their families as tax paying citizens just like the men.

Baltimore Pre-Release Unit for Women began in July 1975 as Community Corrections Center for Women. In 1978, Center was renamed Pre-Release Unit for Women and placed under jurisdiction of Maryland Correctional Pre-Release System (Code Correctional Services Article, secs. 3-301 through 3-305). Unit moved from 4500 Park Heights Avenue to 301 North Calverton Road in July 1991. At that time, it was renamed Baltimore Pre-Release Unit for Women with a capacity for 136 inmates. It was placed under jurisdiction of Maryland Correctional Institution for Women - Jessup in Nov. 1999.

Under the Maryland Women Pre-Release Unit Code Annotated 3-303, it is the commissioner duties to provide rehabilitative pre-release services to develop, implement, assist, and make sure pre-release women needs are met. However, due to overcrowding most women are released without ever obtaining any educational, wellness, or substance abuse help needed to successfully integrate and transition back into their communities. They never receive work release opportunities. Furthermore, due to not receiving aid two-thirds of the women incarcerated, thirty-one percent are repeat offenders.

Legislation re-establishing a separate Brick and Mortar Pre-release Center for Women will finally provide gender equity for incarcerated women. Per a former resident who was recently released after 19 years' "women are being released after years of incarceration with no transitioning, training, programing, or work release to prepare them for the real world. One example was a woman being recently released where she never had any computer training, never attended any programing preparing her for her release, and she never participated in work release". We must insist that the Department of Public Safety and Correction provide equity among its Men and Women being released from incarceration.

**The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women strongly urges the passage of Senate Bill 682.**

**Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW)**

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# MLAW Supporting Organizations

The following organizations have signed on in support of 2020 Legislative Agenda:

AAUW Maryland  
Anne Arundel County Commission for Women  
Anne Arundel County NOW  
Baltimore County Women's Commission  
Business and Professional Women of Maryland (BPW/MD)  
Calvert County Commission for Women  
Charles County Commission of Veterans Affairs  
DC Coalition for Safe and Just Communities  
Federation of Jewish Women's Organization of Maryland  
Greater Washington Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)  
HopeWorks of Howard County  
Laurel RESIST  
Law Office of Carole D. Brown, LLC  
Lincoln Park Historical Foundation  
Maryland Business and Professional Women  
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence  
Maryland NOW  
Maryland Women's Heritage Center  
MoCoWoMen  
Montgomery County BPW  
Montgomery County Commission for Women  
Montgomery County NOW  
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club  
Montgomery County Young Democrats  
NARAL ProChoice Maryland  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., Anne Arundel Chapter  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Prince George's County, MD  
North Arundel Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.  
On Our Own of Montgomery County Inc.  
Planned Parenthood of Maryland  
Prince George's County Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.  
The Human Trafficking Prevention Project  
The Law Office of Jessica O'Kane  
The QED Foundation  
White Lion Social  
Women's Equality Day 2020 Celebration Coalition  
Women's Law Center of Maryland