

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 801:

Gender Response Prerelease Act

TO: Chairman Luke Clippinger, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Derrell Frazier, Policy Advocate

DATE: February 25, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates for policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. JOTF supports House Bill 801 as a means to ensure that women are provided with the skills and training needed to ensure their employability upon release.

About 50 percent of the Maryland workforce is comprised of women, and more than 70 percent of Maryland households are led by women, primarily women of color. This shows that while women are a major part of the state's workforce, employment opportunities for women are scarce. Access to proper child care, education, transportation, are all barriers that women face, and these factors are further concentrated on women who also have criminal records

Simply put, these women need access to employment opportunities. Unfortunately, their criminal record creates a barrier, and lack of access to the valuable life and job skills taught in pre-release programs puts them at a further disadvantage.

House Bill 801 seeks to require the Commissioner of the Division of Correction to provide a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease facility for female inmates. The Commissioner must provide evidence-based and gender-responsive prerelease services for female inmates and provide opportunities to strengthen family and community relationships through extended family leave, parenting workshops, family reunification assistance, and transportation for children and family members to visit female inmates before release.

JOTF strongly supports any legislation that encourages a restructuring of the criminal justice system to ensure that all Marylanders are capable of successfully re-entering their communities and gain employment. For those reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 801.

Commented [c1]: This sentence doesn't make any sense. You gave stats on the female population and none about women unemployment, but said those stats show that employment opps for women are scarce. Pls edit or remove.