



**MARIAN HOUSE**

Women Moving from Dependence to Independence

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB801**  
**Correctional Services- Prerelease Unit for Women**  
**Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act**

TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Katie Allston, Executive Director

DATE: February 24, 2020

Marian House was founded over 37 years ago by my Sisters and laywomen in response to the dire circumstances women faced as they transitioned out of incarceration. These founding women established Marian House as a women-only, safe, stable, and supportive environment for women to go after incarceration, help reduce recidivism rates, and help women achieve their goals and overcome the specific barriers they face.

At Marian House, we serve a complex, high-need population that have experienced many forms of trauma, including incarceration, substance use, violence, homelessness, poverty, abuse, neglect, and more. Effective aftercare and trauma treatment plays a vital role in breaking the cycles of trauma. Marian House aims to continually provide holistic care that treats the whole person, taking into account, their specified, varied needs and past trauma they have experienced. We've seen first-hand that trauma-informed care allows our staff to understand an individual's behaviors and respond appropriately in compassion, recognizing the innate human dignity within each person.

Treatment and services for women is regularly shown to be ineffective unless it acknowledges and addresses the realities of women's lives, which includes a high prevalence of violence and other types of trauma. A separate pre-release unit that focuses on the gender-specific needs of women who have experienced trauma aligns with nationally and internationally renowned best practices across professional fields of helping professions (i.e. medicine, nursing, psychology, social work, and more). It is how we will best serve incarcerated women and ensure that they are not further punished, but rather, supported as they transition back into the community. On behalf of the women we serve at Marian House, I respectfully urge you to take the call to action in **SUPPORT of HB801**.

Thank you for your support,

Katie Allston, LCSW-C  
Executive Director