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**Maryland House Judiciary Committee – Bill Hearing**  
**Friday, March 6, 2020 1:00 PM**  
**Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 1476**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the state-designated Protection and Advocacy agency authorized under the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act and the regulations thereto to protect and advocate for the rights of individuals with mental illness. DRM has been working to review conditions in state correctional facilities, including the quality and access to health care services. We have visited and toured several facilities, reviewed thousands of pages of medical and mental health care records, met with service providers, and spoken with incarcerated individuals throughout the state. Our testimony is informed by what we have learned through this work and from those who are directly impacted.

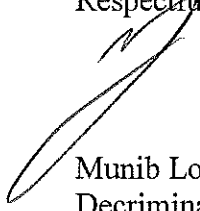
The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) reported a total of 24,431 unique individuals in their custody in fiscal year 2019 with an average daily population of 18,803 individuals. These individuals must rely on DPSCS for basic necessities such as health care, food, and shelter. DPSCS has contracted with Corizon Health, Inc. (Corizon) to provide medical services and with Centurion Managed Care (Centurion) to provide mental health services for individuals in their custody. Both are for-profit companies that have been repeatedly sued for providing inadequate services in correctional facilities in Arizona, Florida, New Mexico, Tennessee, and other jurisdictions throughout the country.

Incarcerated individuals interviewed by DRM have voiced similar concerns, which are supported by their health care records. The most common issues conveyed to DRM relate to inadequate health care. Individuals report waiting for weeks to be seen by a provider after submitting written requests for services, if they receive a response at all. Records reviewed by DRM indicate that individuals with diagnosed mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder may not receive therapy or counseling for years. These records go on to demonstrate that individuals may be denied health care services for reasons beyond their control that are unrelated to their clinical needs, such as facility lockdowns or staffing shortages. Medical supplies and equipment such as catheters may not be provided to individuals who have demonstrated a need for them.

Incarcerated individuals have few options to address their medical or mental health issues if DPSCS fails in their responsibility to provide adequate health care services. They generally may not pursue second opinions or consult with their community health providers. They do not have the option of seeking health care from another provider. This is why independent oversight is necessary to ensure that DPSCS and their contractors meet appropriate health care standards.

DRM urges this committee to issue a favorable recommendation for House Bill 1476 and authorize an independent oversight and review board to review and assess access and quality of health care services for incarcerated individuals in DPSCS custody.

Respectfully,



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