

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL #HB1476

Independent Oversight and Review Board for Health Care of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities-Establishment

Date: March 1, 2020

From: Stacie Forrest, Returning Citizen

To: Chairman Luke Clippinger, Madame Chair Vanessa Atterbeary and Members of the House
Judiciary Committee

Re: SUPPORT FOR BILL#HB1476

I was released from the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in September 2016 after serving 3 years of a 10 year sentence. I am well aware of the inadequate health care offered at the institution, the lack of quality care and the hundreds of women who have come through those gates with legitimate health concerns that are not taken seriously. I understand that as offenders who have violated the law, we may not be considered worthy of certain rights. We gave up our freedom when we made the choice to break the law – however that does not mean that we have given up our rights as citizens who live in the United States of America.

Most of the healthcare providers are contractual and are paid handsomely. They are hardly overworked or underpaid and what is being asked of them every day is not outside of the scope of their job description.

I cannot tell you how many women have suffered because the State has chosen not to respond to frequent requests for additional testing, or specific medication or even to see a specialist. One woman who had been complaining for months about a cough she could not seem to get rid of was told that she needed to drink more tea and to buy more cough drops off of the commissary. A month before she was released, and after serving almost five years, she was finally taken to an outside appointment at the University of Maryland when she began to cough up blood. She was told just one week before she was released that she had lung cancer. She was home for less than 60 days when she passed away.

This is one story of too many to count. I hope that this bill is passed because all women who are incarcerated should not be considered less than because of a poor decision. These women have rights, just like everyone else to be afforded the best possible healthcare. This state can and should do better.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacie Forrest