

Gatekeepers Prison Ministries Favorable Testimony

Uploaded by: Gaertner, Bill

Position: FAV

GATEKEEPERS

For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to LIFE.
Matthew 7:14

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Gatekeepersmd.org

SB 868- State of Maryland Proposed by Senators Corderman, Edwards, West, and Salling Correctional Services-Inmate Release Testimony of William R. Gaertner

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I have outlined below the reasons why SB 868 would benefit individuals being released from a state correctional facility in Washington County, Maryland.

Supporting Positions/ Possible Scenarios

- 1) Returning citizens released to Washington County that are not native to Washington County do not have the proper support system and family that are necessary for a successful reentry.
- 2) There is limited transitional housing available for newly released citizens in Washington County. If newly released citizens are sent to Washington County for example, they would reduce the critical available space that is poised and needed for local residents.
- 3) Some of the citizens who are released to Washington County from another city or county end up in the local Mission or shelters. These community shelters have limited space available. Returning citizens often end up homeless on the streets since the Mission is only a 30-day program.
- 4) Many times, returning citizens have a quasi-home plan set up in Washington County, but they are not from WC. The quasi-home plan involves a person or “relative” who is not conducive to the reentry process. They are not following an outlined and legitimate home plan.

Below are actual examples of individuals that were not set up for success in reentry preparation. This may have been avoided if the individual was transported back to their local county correctional facility, connected with local services/parole and probation, and truly connected to a viable home plan.

Case Examples

- 1) One individual’s home plan was directed to the Mission. He came to us for resources after being released into Washington County. Following the first meeting, the returning citizen departed and never returned. There was no follow through, and he has since terminated contact with us.
- 2) Another individual had an 18-month transition program locally in Hagerstown, which was his home plan. He applied and was accepted while in prison. Upon his release, we picked him up from the gate, and dropped him off at the Mission. It became apparent that he was in no way the kind of person who would follow through with the home plan that was set up prior to release. He was simply using his “home plan” to fulfill his obligations to get released. Since then, we were able to assist his move back to Montgomery County.
- 3) It is extremely common that individuals reach out to Gatekeepers while incarcerated. Returning citizens inquire about possible resources including housing, transportation assistance, other reentry resources. A current example involves an individual who is scheduled for release in October of 2022 and is already

reaching out for assistance but is not from Washington County. We write back and say we are not capable of providing such resources if you are not a local resident.

- 4) Recently, another returning citizen was released in September 2020 from prison and had possessed no documentation. It took him 3 months sitting in one of the local recovery houses in Hagerstown to procure proper identification. He requested funds to pay rent, but the funds are intended for and utilized by Washington County residents only. He had to reach out to family in Harford County to pay his rent.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 868. Thank you.

Bill Gaertner

Founder and Executive Director

Updated Testimony SB868.pdf

Uploaded by: Jones, Elizabeth

Position: FAV

PAUL D. CORDERMAN
Legislative District 2
Washington County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business and Administration

Pensions



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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March 4, 2021

Testimony in Support of SB 868 Correctional Services - Inmate Release

Chair Smith & Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony in favor of SB 868 – Correctional Services – Inmate Release.

As we continue to rehabilitate individuals and prepare them for re-entry, it is critical that we are setting them up to succeed as they reenter society to maximize their chances of success of being productive and contributing members to society.

The intent of this bill is to assist individuals in the reentry process by facilitating their release from our state correctional facilities through the local correctional facilities so that they will be connected with local reentry services, parole/probation, job placement, and other wrap around services to ensure their success. The State Dept. of Corrections will work in tandem with the respective local correctional facility to determine the best timeline for the individual to be relocated to their local facility. The State Dept. of Corrections will use the address the Department has on file when an individual entered the correctional facility, Census data, voter registration data, and, if necessary, Motor Vehicle Administration data to determine the individual's local facility

Without the proper support system in place, a disservice is being done to both the individuals being released from our state correctional facilities and the communities who simply do not have the proper support systems in place to support and assist individuals through a successful reentry process.

Thank you for your consideration as I respectfully ask and urge for a **favorable report on SB 868**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P.D. Corderman".

Paul D. Corderman, District 2 – Washington County

Letter of Support -SB868 - Correctional Services -

Uploaded by: McCarty, Rachael

Position: FAV

Jeffrey A. Cline, *President*
Terry L. Baker, *Vice President*
Krista L. Hart, *Clerk*



Wayne K. Keefer
Cort F. Meinelschmidt
Randall E. Wagner

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

February 23, 2021

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support of SB 868 – Correctional Services – Inmate Release

Dear Senator Smith:

The Board of County Commissioners of Washington County, Maryland, by a vote of 5-0, supports Senate Bill 868. It would require the Division of Correction to transport inmates to a local correctional facility in anticipation of the inmate's release and provide for supervision of each inmate during the release process.

Washington County is the location of three major penitentiaries maintained by the Maryland Division of Correction. These institutions house inmates from all over the state, most of whom, upon release, are in great need of supervision, physical and mental health treatment, job assistance, and transitional assistance in their re-adjustment to life in the community. Many such inmates are a high recidivism risk. If not provided with transitional assistance, many such inmates will have difficulty living successfully as they return to life in the greater community.

For the foregoing reasons, the Board of County Commissioners of Washington County respectfully and without reservation urges the Committee to approve SB 868.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

BY: 
Jeffrey A. Cline, President

cc (via email): Senator Paul D. Corderman

SB 868 Letter of support.pdf

Uploaded by: Newman, George

Position: FAV

March 2, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in full support of Senate Bill 868, the Suzanne Jones Act. As the President and CEO of the Washington County Community Action Council, it is my responsibility to ensure our agency is serving the residents of Washington County that are striving for self-sufficiency. We serve 10,000 clients each year in a variety of programs including energy assistance, eviction prevention, housing counseling, mediation, food pantry and transportation to mention a few. We are 95% grant funded from federal, state and local governments. All of these grants have very specific requirements to assist only Washington County residents and further they have a minimum of a 30-day residency requirement.

Individuals that are released into our community from other counties in Maryland where they committed the crime attempt to get services from CAC. They are denied until they can meet the grant requirements. Frequently these newly released individuals tell staff they have no plan and need help with housing and food, however have no employment or plan for self-sufficiency, which conflicts with our mission. We give our clients a hand up and not a hand out. As a result, too frequently these former inmates regress to committing crimes in our community.

CAC has limited resources that we use to help productive low-income members of our community when they experience a life event such as a medical bill, loss of a job or other unanticipated event that affects their family budget. We cannot and will not provide services to individuals as they are released into our county because they do not meet the minimum qualifications for the grants.

It is critical for our community that Senate Bill 868 is passed. CAC does not have the resources to assist individuals who were not originally residents of Washington County.

Respectfully submitted



SB868_Support_Ltr.pdf

Uploaded by: Nichols, Rachel

Position: FAV



Congregation B'nai Abraham

בני אברהם

March 2, 2021

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Hon. William Smith, Chair

Dear Senator Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing in support of SB868 that would require inmates to be released in the jurisdiction where they domiciled prior to their confinement and for probation/supervision to occur in the jurisdiction of the same.

I serve as a full-time rabbi of the only Jewish community in the area and as the immediate past president of a large interfaith coalition, consisting of over 40 faith houses of worship. Our faith community works together beyond the walls of our sanctuaries and with the greater community. It is through this spirit of civic and inter-religious cooperation that I offer my own perspective on this complicated situation.

We all agree on the immorality of carelessly releasing inmates into environments lacking support. At first glance, an approved "home plan" for an inmate addresses this concern. It should provide a safe and familiar atmosphere for a person in transition. But the reality is different than the ideal. Why? Hagerstown is at the front lines of a national crisis of substance abuse where a "home plan" is likely an insufficient support system for certain released inmates. Hagerstown sits at the intersection of I-81 and I-70, described as the Heroin Highway. Dealers from far away pump Fentanyl and Oxycontin through our transportation arteries and into the veins of our people.

Many who are recently released from incarceration already feel the pain of harsh judgment. Someone who turns to drugs does so as a quick fix to void the pain, especially the pain of judgment. Too frequently, the answer is to take drugs that provide a false comfort. As a rather small city, surrounded by a rural area. Hagerstown and Washington County are simply not fiscally or institutionally equipped with sufficient treatment or law enforcement infrastructure to deal with the scope of the problem. Is it just to release those who have struggled with drugs into an area already overwhelmed by a drug crisis? Does the current approach unwittingly privilege drug predators over their prey?

In a multitude of ways, the faith community seeks to help drug victims so that they feel God's love and our love, rather than judgment, shame, and rejection. Those who suffer are as much mental health victims as they are criminal offenders. Are those responsible for developing an overall strategy for re-entry fully considering whether communities like mine have the proportional resources to support and protect those victims of the opioid crises?

Thank you,

Rabbi Ari Plost
Congregation B'nai Abraham

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SB0868-JPR_MACo_SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Sanderson, Michael

Position: FWA



Senate Bill 868

Correctional Services – Inmate Release

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
with AMENDMENTS

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: March 4, 2021

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 868 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill creates a system to relocate State prisoners to their “home” jurisdiction’s detention facility during the days prior to their release. **MACo urges amendments to grant the host facility’s governing body an approval over such arrangements and their details.**

Communities that host State correctional facilities bear a community burden associated with prisoner release. In some cases, without access to transportation and other resources, newly released inmates have little choice but to seek short-term accommodations in the area surrounding the facility – and in some cases remain there. SB 868 seeks to target this concern by creating a process for relocating inmates to their “home” jurisdiction prior to release, to increase the likelihood that family and familiar contacts will offer a more readily available landing for newly released inmates.

Under the terms of SB 868 as written, the State and county may determine a rate of compensation for the short-term care envisioned under the bill. MACo urges that this negotiation be expanded to include the local agreement by the governing body of the affected county – ensuring that the community effects beyond the local detention center will be properly considered as part of the receiving county’s acceptance. The agreement with the host county and its facility could determine the categories of inmates suitable for transfer, the appropriate duration to be housed locally, and the like. With such an amendment, MACo would support this approach to this concern.

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 868 a **FAVORABLE** report, **with amendments** to ensure that the governing body of the affected local detention center has agreed to the terms of the arrangement.