



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 09, 2021

HB 1233

Correctional Services - Inmates - Intake and Release Requirements (Reentry Success Act of 2021)

House Judiciary Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public-policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch) dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

House Bill 1233 requires the Division of Correction to provide screening for and access to private mediation between a certain inmate and an individual identified by the inmate as essential for the successful reentry of the inmate into society; requiring the Division of Correction at certain times to work with an inmate to ensure that an inmate has access to certain medication, social service programs, and public transportation at the time of the inmate's release; and requiring the Commissioner of Correction to adopt certain regulations.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recently issued a letter to the Congressional House Judiciary Committee stating *“Unfortunately, too few of those who return to our communities from prison or jail are prepared for their release or receive any supportive services beyond a bus ticket and a few days’ spending money. One-third of all corrections departments provide no funds whatsoever to prisoners upon release. In addition, many of those leaving jail and prison suffer from chronic health problems, have no housing, little education or job training, and generally lack the supportive services needed for a successful re-entry. As a result sixty-seven percent of persons released from state prisons were arrested for new crimes within the first three years after release, according to a 2002 study by the Justice Department.”*

Additionally, the Conference firmly supports restorative justice practices. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that *“People must be held accountable for their actions but justice and restoration must be the object of punishment which must have a constructive and reformative purpose” (Restorative Justice: Healing and Transformation of Persons, Families and Communities, USCCB, 2015).*

House Bill 1233 is a restorative justice measure and the Church maintains that systems of incarceration should always be centered on *restorative* justice. When inmates are given the tools for success upon post-release their chances to break free from their often-challenging circumstances and live productive lives are exponentially enhanced. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 1233.