

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0604

Office of the Attorney General – Correctional Ombudsman

TO: Hon. Chair Joseph F. Vallario, Jr., and members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Drew Lermond, BSN/Th.M./PhD

DATE: February 15, 2022

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My name is Dr. Drew Lermond writing in support of HB 0604. I am also a member of Maryland Association of Justice Reform, which group helped draft this bill.

The reason I am in support of this vital bill comes from my personal experience as a guest of the Maryland Correctional Training Center, Hagerstown, MD and Jessup, MD, from June 2015 – July 2019. Prior to my incarceration I had worked in the medical field for close to 30 years, beginning in 1997 as a volunteer EMT/FF, through the US Navy as a Sea Air Rescue Combat Corpsman, and then finally as RN till my incarceration.

Throughout those years I advocated for my patients in various ways, insuring they understood the medical therapies offered by the medical teams, both the positive and negative consequences to those therapies. More importantly I wanted them to know how those decisions could affect the personal values they hold most dear, insuring that these values and goals were heard by the medical team and taken into account in the plan of care.

While incarcerated, I saw and was personally affected by poor communication and abuse between inmates and correctional staff, medical staff, and others in authority. During my time at MCTC, one of the things I observed that was needed was an advocate/ombudsman, someone outside the chain of command of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, who would have authority to investigate the very things this bill will try to address.

There are many things that can and should be improved within DPSC and prisons statewide. It is my strong feeling that this will be a good first step towards that improvement process for both correctional staff and inmate alike.

Thank you for your time on the valuable bill.

Sincerely,

Drew Lermond, BSN/Th.M./PhD.