

Dear Delegate Clippinger and members of the Judiciary Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by the Northeast Catholic Community, a coalition of several Catholic Churches in the northeast part of Baltimore. We are working in collaboration with the Maryland Justice Project. I am a taxpayer, a psychologist, and a resident of District 43 represented by Del. Anderson on this Committee. I am testifying in support of HB 337.

As a psychologist, I am well aware of the long-lasting damage done to children by being separated from their primary caretaker. Being separated from a caretaker who is in jail or prison is recognized by the CDC as an Adverse Childhood Experience(ACE). Children who experience ACEs are more likely to have mental health challenges, substance use, and chronic health problems. Specifically, having a parent who is incarcerated is associated with poor academic outcomes, antisocial behaviors, and school suspension and expulsion. On any given day, 90,000 Maryland children have a parent under some form of correctional supervision. Persons of color are disproportionately impacted by our criminal justice system, meaning that children of color are especially at risk of experiencing the negative effects of parental incarceration.

While the impacts of incarceration on children are daunting, *these negative experiences can be prevented*. Community-based sentencing alternatives help children and caretakers. Sentencing alternatives allow a primary caretaker to be a stable, uninterrupted presence in a child's life. Justice-involved caretakers who stay with their children experience better outcomes as well. In Washington, women who participated in the Parent Sentencing Alternative program had a recidivism rate of 8%, whereas women who were incarcerated and separated from their children had a recidivism rate of 29%.

Finally, this bill proposes a more cost-efficient approach to sentencing. This bill saves money by potentially avoiding incarceration (a policy that costs \$44,000 per person per year in Maryland). By keeping families together, it may also reduce state spending on programs (such as foster care) that are activated by family instability.

I know we are experiencing an increase in violence in our state. Please do not let pressure from those who say we must be tough on crime convince you to punish these non-violent offenders and their children. Given all the benefits of HB337, it is imperative the judges seriously consider all alternatives to incarceration. I am encouraging the Committee to vote in support of HB337.

Thank you,

Carol Rice, 406 Northway, Baltimore, Md. 21218

Northeast Catholic Community

