



2-7-2023

To the Honorable Senate,

I am the Executive Director of Life After Release in Camp Springs Maryland. We are in favor of SB0087. Please consider this as our written testimony in support of the Correctional Ombudsman Bill.

As the ED for Life After Release I have heard story after horror story for over 4 years. There is no Transparency and accountability in the many forms of the government systems, especially the prison/jail system. I hear stories from family members and loved ones behind the wall speaking on abuse, lack of medical care, little to no mental health treatment, abrupt disruption of rehabilitation programs with little educational services. I believe that this bubble has already burst into a systemic issue.

Youth, Men and Women are unable to report abuse or lack of medical care without being a target met with physical abuse and sometimes murder with the staff walking away with clean hands. The entire community is impacted when oversight fails and avenues for redress are limited.

The Correctional Ombudsman would also provide an opportunity for staff to confidentially share their concerns about past incidents and about emerging problems, and to highlight those aspects of prison operations that are working well or not. Having an external, independent oversight can be effective and positively impact the overall facility operations for both the staff and the loved ones behind the wall.

This bill is designed to meet what the ABA calls for. Without a system of external oversight there are few ways to determine if the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services priorities and mission are consistent with actual practices.

We urge a favorable report. Thank you for your time.

*Ms. Qiana Johnson*