



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 27: Criminal Procedure - Restorative Justice Program

TO: Senator Will Smith, Jr. Chair and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Karen “Candy” Clark,
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) requests a favorable vote on **SB 27 Criminal Procedure – the Restorative Justice Program**. The bill aligns with UULM-MD’s seven principles, the first, and most important of which is the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all individuals.

The effectiveness of our correctional system would benefit greatly from Restorative Justice. Instead of labeling, alienating or isolating people, it can bring individuals, families, and even communities together. Our recidivism rate is currently 70%, which proves that punishment alone is not an effective—or cost efficient—method to address crime in the community. The Restorative Justice process has the potential to reduce the recidivism rate; the healing and transformational qualities reduce the chances of repeat offenses by humanizing the participants.

Currently, the Restorative Justice process is being used in many school systems across the country. In addition, Twenty states specifically list its use in various other venues such as criminal justice systems, hospitals, workplaces, communities, churches and children’s services . Usually they address low level offenses, but a few, such as the national “Impact Justice” organization, do both. The US Restorative Justice Protocols have been applied in other countries as well, including: Canada, England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Indonesia and Germany. Closer to home, the process is underway in communities like Baltimore’s Community Conferencing Center and Brooklyn’s Common Justice Center. Many cities, such as Annapolis and Minneapolis, have victim-offender mediation programs.

Maryland is currently ranked 23rd on The Public Policy Institute of New York state’s Best to Worst US Correctional Systems. With SB 27, perhaps our ranking, and the lives of the people who go through our criminal justice system, can improve.

Respectfully submitted,
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