

February 7, 2023

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 0087  
Correctional Ombudsman Bill

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am a registered voter who resides in District #41. Having served over forty-two consecutive years in Maryland's prison system, I am all too familiar with the failures of prisoners, correctional staff, contractual services, and DPSCS policies and procedures. Thus, I support the Office of Attorney General - Correctional Ombudsman Bill.

Conflict exists within MD's correctional system. Though most differences are resolved in a timely fashion through established remedy procedures, some are not addressed quickly enough or appropriately. Physical altercations, illnesses, deaths, and unhealthy environments for residents, staff and civilians result from mishandled grievances.

So, a non-partisan agent overseeing statutory and regulatory provisions regarding correctional services is a public safety issue. The legislature enacted laws governing operations of prison facilities for this very reason. Correctional staff should be able to work and prisoners should be able to reside in productive and safe environments. After all, most incarcerated men and women will be released.

One has to question the effectiveness of the existing system of checks and balances. Most of us tend to do what is inspected as opposed to what is expected. It is not uncommon for some to overlook and conceal the shortcomings of peers. The fact that audit teams and investigative units report to the very people responsible for their paychecks is problematic.

Having a neutral party to investigate, oversee, and mediate the implementation of statutory and regulatory correctional service provisions is a means to ensure public safety. Again, I support Ombudsman Bill. More importantly, I urge you to vote favorably for SB 0097.

Truly yours,

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