



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 7th, 2023

HB 877

Correctional Services - Incarcerated Individuals - Intake and Release (Reentry Success Act)

House Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 877 requires the Division of Correction to provide screening for and access to certain mediation for an incarcerated individual; requiring the Division to work with an incarcerated individual to ensure access to medication, social service programs, and public transportation at the time of the incarcerated individual's release; and requiring a State transit system or transit system partially funded by the State to provide the Division with transit passes for use by released incarcerated individuals at no cost to the Division.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recently issued a letter to the Congressional House Judiciary Committee stating *"Unfortunately, too few of those who return to our communities from prison or jail are prepared for their release or receive any supportive services beyond a bus ticket and a few days' spending money. One-third of all corrections departments provide no funds whatsoever to prisoners upon release. In addition, many of those leaving jail and prison suffer from chronic health problems, have no housing, little education or job training, and generally lack the supportive services needed for a successful re-entry. As a result, sixty-seven percent of persons released from state prisons were arrested for new crimes within the first three years after release, according to a 2002 study by the Justice Department."*

Additionally, the Conference firmly supports restorative justice practices. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that *"People must be held accountable for their actions, but justice and restoration must be the object of punishment which must have a constructive and reformative purpose"* (*Restorative Justice: Healing and Transformation of Persons, Families and Communities*, USCCB, 2015).

House Bill 877 is a restorative justice measure, and the Church maintains that systems of incarceration should always be centered on *restorative* justice. When inmates are given the tools for success upon post-release their chances to break free from their often-challenging circumstances and live productive lives are exponentially enhanced. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 877.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 877.