



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

March 26, 2024

HB 37

Reentry Services for Women – Commission and Pilot Program - Establishment

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 37. The 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 37 would establish the Commission on Reentry Services for Women in order to create a comprehensive reentry plane for formerly incarcerated women. This legislation makes important steps towards addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by formerly incarcerated women as they transition back into society.

Our Catholic faith calls us to recognize the inherent dignity of every human person and to provide support and opportunities for individuals to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to their communities. Formerly incarcerated women face numerous barriers to successful reentry, including lack of access to housing, employment, education, healthcare, and supportive services. By establishing the Commission on Reentry Services for Women, we demonstrate our commitment to understanding and addressing these challenges in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

The Catholic tradition emphasizes the importance of solidarity and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, urging us to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized and to advocate for policies and programs that promote their well-being and dignity. Investing in reentry services and supports for formerly incarcerated women is not only a matter of justice but also a moral imperative. It is essential for fostering healing, reconciliation, and the restoration of relationships within families and communities.

This program has the potential to connect formerly incarcerated women to critical services, including housing assistance, job training, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and peer support networks. By investing in reentry services and supports, we can help women break the cycle of incarceration, rebuild their lives, and contribute positively to our communities.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 37.

