

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony in Support of House Bill 37

Services for Formerly Incarcerated Women - Commission and Pilot Program - Establishment

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Jr., and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: March 26, 2024

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports House Bill 37, which would establish a Commission on Services for Formerly Incarcerated Women staffed by the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP). The commission would study the challenges women face when returning to communities after incarceration; identify all existing programs available to currently and formerly incarcerated women in State agencies; identify service gaps for women who were formerly incarcerated or detained; and create a comprehensive five-year plan to address the needs of and create solutions for women who were formerly incarcerated or detained in the State**

According to a special report by the U.S. Department of Justice [2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period \(2005-2014\)](#), state prisoner recidivism rates average around 68 percent for rearrests within the first three years post-release. And according to a [report](#) by The Sentencing Project, a research and advocacy center working for decarceration in the United States and seeking to address racial disparities in the criminal justice system, a major contribution to recidivism rates throughout the United States is lack of resources or connection to resources that aid prisoners’ prosocial integration into the community. People exiting prison from long-term confinement need stronger support around them. Many people exhibit a low crime risk but have high psychological, financial, and vocational demands that have been greatly exacerbated by their lengthy incarceration.

JOTF is in full support of HB 37, which takes these factors into account and seeks to identify gaps in reentry services and address them. Formerly incarcerated and detained women have specific issues and challenges when returning into society. A system that adequately addresses the myriad issues that returning citizens have while trying to return into society would naturally have resources dedicated specifically to women. This is common sense solution that directly addresses the biggest factors for recidivism. This legislation actually gives formerly incarcerated women the tools to start on the right path, as opposed to releasing them with no support system and feigning surprise when they reoffend.

For these reasons, JOTF supports House Bill 37 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

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