

# HELPING OURSELVES TO TRANSFORM

EDUCATING AND PROMOTING  
MASS LIBERATION

1250 Connecticut Avenue suite 700 Washington, DC 20036  
14625 Baltimore Avenue #204 Laurel, MD 20707

## Favorable for SB0134 and HB0297

Dear President Senator Will Smith and Members of the Judicial Committee,

At Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT), our commitment to social justice and civic engagement drives us to address and rectify systemic inequalities and injustices across critical areas including race, gender, income, religion, education, and environmental concerns. Our goal is to forge a society that upholds equity for all its members.

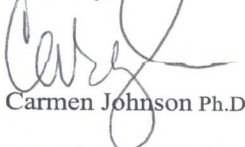
In alignment with our mission, we wholeheartedly endorse **SB0134/**HB0297, the "Correctional Ombudsman Bill." The current state of Maryland's prisons—marked by unsanitary conditions, peril, and insufficient access to medical and mental health care—demands urgent reform. The rampant abuse and the consequent fatalities and retaliatory actions within these facilities highlight the critical need for this legislation.

The establishment of an independent Correctional Ombudsman is imperative. This bill represents a pivotal step towards transparency and accountability in the management of correctional facilities outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). It aims to safeguard the well-being of both staff and inmates by advocating for safer, more effectively managed institutions. By emphasizing the reduction of deaths, injuries, and grievances, and by striving for improved healthcare and legal compliance, the Ombudsman will play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of correctional facilities.

The envisioned Ombudsman office will not only monitor and report on systemic issues but also ensure that annual findings are communicated to the Governor and the General Assembly. This role is vital in fostering an environment that honors the rights of all individuals within the correctional system, including incarcerated individuals, their families, volunteers, and staff. Through the lens of transparency and accountability, we anticipate the development of more humane and rehabilitative conditions within Maryland's prisons.

We urge the senate and house of delegates to pass this transformative bill, thereby committing to the improvement of our state's correctional facilities and the lives of those within them.

Sincerely,



Carmen Johnson Ph.D

Founder of Helping Ourselves to Transform

202-674-6300

For the Support of the Correctional Ombudsman Bill  
Guidance for Written Testimony (2024 Legislative Session)  
IN FAVOR – Correctional Ombudsman Bill # SB0134/HB0297

Name: Kevin D. Fletcher, CPRS, Coordinator # 2473004  
JCI PO BOX 534  
Jessup, Maryland 20794  
Date: January 2024

To all invested parties:

My name is Kevin D. Fletcher, I am a Maryland resident, born and raised. I am a criminal justice reform advocate, committed to civic engagement. I am conscious of the upcoming legislation initiatives and I work to bring equity behind the prison walls. I have family and friends in Maryland and we want to support people who protect our interests. I support a favorable vote on this bill. I have served 20 years as a juvenile lifer. My lived experienced with the atrocities and neglect of the returning citizen population serve as an opportunity for change.

Without independent oversight, the systematic oppression continues. Millions of dollars are annually allocated to Public Safety, however services are not provided. There is no accountability to measure the State money spent, against successful reentry preparation. If we continue the status quo, are we complicit in manufacturing criminals?

One of the biggest challenges we face without independent oversight in correctional operations is the lack of accountability to the law, which denies an oppressed community resources. Specifically, the State has contractors, a budget, and polices that are not implemented. Money is allocated for programs that aren't being ran. Maintenance issues are health hazards that are covered up and dismissed through the ARP process.

If money is allocated to provide services to the incarcerated community, then funds are being misappropriated when we are denied those services. Mold, mildew, leaking ceilings, broken windows, unclean ventilation vents, rodent infestation. Medical care, mental health, and substance abuse services are not up to statute. These are the biggest contracts in Public Safety.

There are many incidents of unprofessional staff conduct/communication towards our families, both in person and on the phone. I currently watch the non-English speaking community denied medical treatment and an interpreter due to lazy staffing. Independent oversight will save money, by tracking where money is utilized. Also, remove leadership who allow these systemic errors to exist. Independent oversight also, created a more functional business, a well oiled machine, form a 3<sup>rd</sup> party ,not working to protect the system as it is, but to become compliant with the law. Independent oversight will created a more effective public safety correctional system.

I am asking for a FAVORABLE VOTE in support of the Correctional Ombudsman Bill.

Thank you,



Kevin D. Fletcher

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

To the Maryland General Assembly Proceedings and Judiciary Committee

Date: November 9, 2023

From: Hakim Jordan-EI

In favor- Correctional Ombudsman Bill# SB0134 / HB0297

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in reference to the above bill that honestly I feel this bill is a change maker for Maryland. As of this year, I will have over 18 years in day for day in the Correctional system. I have experience things go from bad to worst from one facility to another just dealing with mental and physical health care.

Growing up with lead paint poison as well as mental illness my live experience allows me to identify and emphasize with those that are going through what I have went through by seeking help from those that I felt had the skill set to aid me and perhaps heal me but would or far better words couldn't.

I feel as is those that was in charge of that part of the medical field was held accountable it would show an great improvement with Maryland prison system as well as those that are returning back in our community because I would help those that really want that help to stop medicating themselves.

Thank you,

Hakim Jordan-EI #2653082

  
J.C.K. Box

Jessup, Maryland 20794

Rahmon Jaquan Felder #4503526

Jessup Correctional Institution

P.O. Box 534

Jessup, MD 20794

To: The Maryland General Assembly Judicial Proceedings and Judiciary Committees.

I AM RAHMON JAQUAN FELDER, I AM CURRENTLY A RESIDENT OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND. I'VE HAD OVER FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE MARYLAND CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM; I AM IN FAVOR OF THE CORRECTIONAL OMBUDSMAN BILL #

I PERSONALLY BELIEVE OVERSIGHT WILL BENEFIT ALL PARTIES INVOLVED. INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT WOULD BE THE BEST TYPE OF OVERSIGHT, WE WOULD HAVE A GREATER CHANCE AT HAVING AN UNBIAS INSPECTION, AS WELL AS ACCOUNTABILITY.

THERE ARE SOME MAJOR ISSUES WITH THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE INCARCERATED COMMUNITY, THE CONDITION OF THE FACILITY/FACILITIES, AS WELL AS MISTREATMENT BY STAFF ETC.

I AM IN FAVOR OF THE CORRECTIONAL OMBUDSMAN BILL # SBO134/HBO297

James Wood #1160506  
JCI PO Box 534  
Jessup, Maryland 20794

November 8, 2023

To the Maryland General Assembly Judicial Proceedings and Judiciary Committees

IN FAVOR – CORRECTIONAL OMBUDSMAN BILL# SB0134 | HB0297

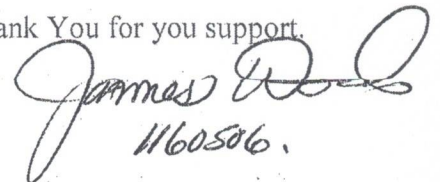
My name is James Wood 1160506, I am currently incarcerated in the Jessup Correctional Institution, serving a life w/o parole sentence for the last 29 years. I am writing in support of the Correctional Ombudsman Bill.

By not having an agency with direct oversight of the Correctional institutions in Maryland great travesty have happen on a perpetual scale. Men and women have beaten by staff and residence without any consequence. Men have been left to die in cells because officers lacked the professionalism and downright human decency to help their fellow man. Men and women, not animals, have been left in cells with no human contact for years. Facilities have falsified reports about services they're providing that are needed for an offender to make parole. Parole Commissioner are denying offenders parole telling them to complete particular programs that DPSCS does not provide. And yet it is purported that "we" are trying to reduce recidivism rates.

If there were an independent oversight of all the above mentioned, the offender would have a voice, someone who could hold accountable those who are paid by the state of Maryland ensure the safety of it's citizens by decreasing the chances of re-offending.

I as a incarcerated citizen of Maryland I am asking for a favorable vote on the Correctional Ombudsman Bill.

Thank You for you support.

  
1160506.

Randall Martin #274704

274704

P.O. Box 534

Jessup, Maryland

[21794]

SB0134/HB0297

To the Maryland General Assembly Judicial Proceedings  
& Judiciary Committees:

I'm writing in support of the Ombudsman bill scheduled for legislation this coming year. I'm a Baltimore County incarcerated citizen from the 21208 zip code.

Having a Correctional Ombudsman would cure many of the ignored and inhumane issues that have become so commonplace, that incarcerated men & women have sadly become too accustomed to. Maryland's incarcerated citizens have suffered and dealt with too long issues of:

- \* Fractured ARP processes
- \* Less than adequate medical treatment and responses
- \* Freezing cold dining rooms, where food is served far below temperature
- \* Rec. Halls & housing units littered with mold
- \* Family days that are not designed and organized to support family wellness
- \* Zero de-escalation training (or used) from staff
- \* Ignored obvious evidences of illegal substance use  
(Just to list a few)

Just as the institution paints and cleans ahead of a visit from the public, a Correctional Ombudsman would be the surprise visiting public that will keep Maryland prisons clean, focused on regulations, rules and doing the right and correct procedures.

Please support the Ombudsman Bill!

Sincerely,  
R. Martin

From: Tairahaan Mallard #4151774

Jessup Correctional Institution, 7800 House of Correctional Road, Jessup MD. 20794

Date: November 07, 2023

**To the Maryland General Assembly Judicial Proceedings and Judiciary Committees**

IN FAVOR – correctional Ombudsman Bill # SB0134/HB0297

I am a Maryland resident through the Interstate Compact. I was transferred here from the New Jersey State Prison approximately in November, 2014. I transferred here because my daughter was born in the state of Maryland in December, 2000. When her mother passed away in 2010, I felt it necessary to transfer here in order to be closer to her. I support a favorable vote in support of the bill.

Some of the challenges that I see arise from not having independent oversight over the correctional operations are lack of responsibility, lack of accountability, lack of professionalism, and lack of civility. In all areas of the correctional institution, medical, facility operations, ARP/IGP process, and correctional officers themselves.

- **Lack of Responsibility** - The overall culture in this institution is that there is no one to turn to resolve a problem or assist in finding a solution. This is evident pertaining to the "Chain of Command" process. The shift officer does not want to deal with the situation, so you go to a sergeant, then a lieutenant, then so and so forth. Additionally, those rare occasions where you may actually receive assistance from someone in authority, the subordinate officer "disregards" whatever the ranking officer has determined. This has created a culture of "Who's in Charge" of the situation, often times, resulting in no solution to the original problem.
- **Lack of Accountability** – The overall culture, when it pertains to the correctional staff inside of this institution, is that of "Tribalism." It is well aware that most of the correctional staff in this region is of African descent. The correctional staff is divided into the tribes they are from in their homeland. So, if you have a sergeant from one tribe trying to enforce institutional policies over officers of another tribe, insubordination occurs. Often times, resulting in unfavorable conditions for the incarcerated residents inside of the institution. This type of behavior also has created a culture of the correctional staff believing that they do not have to answer to anybody, allowing them to operate as they wish with impunity. It is imperative to have independent oversight over the correctional operations in order to hold the entire correctional staff "accountable" when it comes to their duties and responsibilities.

- **Lack of Professionalism** – The correctional staff inside of these institutions have adopted a “disrespectful discourse” when it pertains to communication. Professional Training has no place here. The correctional staff speak to the incarcerated population the same way that some of the incarcerated population speaks to them, in disrespectful connotations, colorful language, and an overall disregard for conflict resolution.
- **Lack of Civility** – There is disconnect between the correctional staff and the incarcerated population. The lack of “civility” on behalf of the correctional staff is paramount in bridging the gap. Their ability to separate their personal views, beliefs, and cultural competence has created a barrier of unfortunate misunderstandings, often times, resulting in misguided solutions and insufficient resolutions. The lack of civility by the correctional staff is additionally experienced by the loved ones of the incarcerated population. I refuse to have my family come and visit me because I don’t want them to be subjugated to the harsh mistreatment displayed by the officers.

Independent oversight will resolve these issues or bring them to light before they could become wide-spread issues by restoring accountability. The correctional staff know that as long as everything is handled “in-house,” they are free to operate with impunity. I believe that the idea of knowing that there will be “outside oversight that is not only fair and impartial, but also going to hold them accountable for their actions” will be a major shift in the overall functioning of the correctional operations.

I am asking for a FAVORABLE VOTE in support of the Correctional Ombudsman Bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I am looking forward to your response.

Respectfully Submitted,

*T. Mallard #4151774*

Tairahaan Mallard, #4151774