



**COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLUSTER**

March 25, 2024
Senator William Smith
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 37 Reentry Services for Women - Commission and Pilot Program - Establishment

Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chairperson Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

On behalf of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, I am writing to ask for your support of HB 37 — Reentry Services for Women - Commission and Pilot Program - Establishment. There are currently limited services available to women in Maryland who are preparing to reenter their communities, with only one women-only reentry program located in Baltimore City.

Research has shown that substance abuse, weak social bonds, unemployment, and lack of education and skills are the most prevalent reasons for women to recidivate and return to incarceration, starting a vicious cycle that makes it very difficult for them to break free and become productive members of our state. When women are incarcerated, it not only impacts them, but whole family systems face negative consequences. Women need support when they return home from incarceration to ensure they can provide a stable environment for themselves, their children, and others who depend on them for support and care.

CFW supports this bill because this program will help provide women with the necessary tools and skills to support themselves and their families financially, contributing to their empowerment and self-sufficiency. This can include vocational training, education, and assistance finding employment, all crucial for rebuilding their lives.

Effective programming for women transitioning from prison is not only a matter of social justice but also a pragmatic approach to building safer, healthier, and more equitable communities. By addressing the specific needs of women and providing comprehensive support, society can break the cycle of incarceration and promote positive, lasting change.

It is time for Maryland to ensure that women returning from incarceration have the support they need to reduce their risk of recidivism and improve their odds of a safe, effective, and productive return to Maryland communities. We urge a favorable report on HB 37.

Sincerely,
Montgomery County Commission for Women