

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee</b>
<b>Bill Number:</b>	<b>House Bill 37</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Services for Formerly Incarcerated Women – Commission and Pilot Program – Establishment</b>
<b>Hearing Date:</b>	<b>March 26, 2024</b>
<b>Position:</b>	<b>Support</b>

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The Women's Law Center of Maryland (WLC) supports *House Bill 37 - Services for Formerly Incarcerated Women – Commission and Pilot Program – Establishment*. The bill creates a Commission on Services for Formerly Incarcerated Women to draft a comprehensive plan for services for formerly incarcerated women and a Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Women to connect these women to support services.

Discourse on criminal justice policy and reentry reform tend to either ignore or marginalize the significance of the growing number of incarcerated women, especially those who are parenting. Similarly, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and state departments of corrections have yet to fully recognize the distinct gender- and family-specific considerations of incarcerating pregnant women and mothers with minor children. Across the country, there are few prison-based programs specifically designed for pregnant and parenting women, and none in Maryland. The inadequacy of services for these women is not limited to incarceration settings but affects women at every point in their involvement with the criminal justice system. Pre-trial diversion and release services, court-sentenced alternatives, and re-entry programs for mothers are restricted in number, size, and effectiveness because the system was developed to serve men.<sup>i</sup>

This bill is critical to recognize the unique support needs of formerly incarcerated women. We strongly urge a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net) or (443) 926-3443.

**The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change, working to ensure physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy for women in Maryland.**

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<sup>i</sup> Mothers Behind Bars: A state-by-state report card and analysis of federal policies on conditions of confinement for pregnant and parenting women and the effect on their children. <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/mothersbehindbars2010.pdf>