

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 720

### Correctional Services - Formerly Incarcerated Individuals and Individuals on Probation - Re-Entry Services

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

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: February 28, 2024

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

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 Senate Bill 720, which would establish a program in Prince George's County to provide formerly incarcerated individuals and individuals on probation with assistance obtaining vital documentation, identification, housing information, legal assistance, and other crucial supports.**

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 SB 720, which takes these factors into account and provides returning citizens with resources to connect them with programs and organizations that can help them reintegrate into society. A centralized system that addresses the myriad issues that returning citizens have while trying to return into society is common sense solution that directly addresses the biggest factors for recidivism. This legislation actually gives formerly incarcerated people the tools to start on the right path, as opposed to releasing them with no support system and feigning surprise when they reoffend.

According to Maryland's Division of Correction, the average annual cost of room and board and health care per inmate was \$59,616. While the fiscal note takes into account the \$3 million annual appropriation, it does not consider either the annual savings for individuals who would otherwise be reoffenders if not for the program, or the tax revenues gained from individuals who obtain gainful employment through the program. In fact, even without taking into account the tax revenues, the program would essentially pay for itself if only 51 people per year avoid recidivism through this program. For this reason, JOTF supports this bill with an amendment that requires the program to report on one year and three-year recidivism rates for

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individuals who came through the program to the Maryland General Assembly and DPCSC. Analyzing recidivism rates for program participants against the statewide recidivism rates would allow for cogent analysis of its effectiveness and allow for consideration of scalability in other jurisdictions such as Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

**For these reasons, JOTF supports Senate Bill 720 and urges a favorable report with amendments.**

**For more information, contact:**

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