



MARCH 26, 2024

Re-entry Services Are Critical for Returning Citizens, Their Families and Maryland Communities

Position Statement in support of House Bill 37

Given before the Judicial Proceedings Committee

Re-entry services are critical to supporting Marylanders who are returning to their communities following a period of incarceration. They provide returning citizens with an opportunity to begin reintegration into their communities with critical services in place to ease this transition. Services such as health care and drug rehabilitation, education, vocational training, and, critically, transitional housing away from prison and nearer to job centers and their community. For many incarcerated women in Maryland, these services are far and few between.

- Data on community releases from The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Department (DPSCS) show that in FY 2023 75 out of 199 women returned to communities with **no local reentry agreement** and FY 2024 projections are 14 out of 52ⁱ.
- Local reentry efforts around the state have been underutilized, according to an article by [Herald Media](#). The report showed that most counties have only a few individuals accepted by the state for this program.
- Very few incarcerated women at the MCI-W are assigned to rehabilitative programming or work release, according to the Department of Legislative Servicesⁱⁱ.

As amended in the House, HB 37 seeks to address the gaps in services for returning women by establishing a commission for formerly incarcerated women. This commission, staffed by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) and formerly incarcerated women, is tasked with studying the specific challenges women face after incarceration and establish a five-year plan addressing these unique challenges. In addition, House Bill 37 establishes the Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Women to connect formerly incarcerated women to resources with the support of several state agencies such as the Maryland Department of Labor and the Department of Health. Successful re-entry is a critical step to ensure returning women can rebuild their life. **For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the Judiciary Proceedings Committee make favorable report on House Bill 37.**

Equity Impact Analysis: House Bill 37

Bill summary

House Bill 37 establishes a Commission on Services for Formerly Incarcerated Women in the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, tasked with creating a comprehensive plan for services for formerly incarcerated women. By June 30, 2025, the commission must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. In addition, the bill establishes a Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Women to connect formerly incarcerated women to supportive services.

Background

For many incarcerated women in Maryland, re-entry services are far and few between.

- Data on community releases from The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Department (DPSCS) show that in FY 2023 75 out of 199 women returned to communities with **no local reentry agreement** and FY 2024 projections are 14 out of 52ⁱⁱⁱ.
- Local reentry efforts around the state have been underutilized according to an article by [Herald Media](#). The report showed that most counties have only a few individuals accepted by the State for this program.
- Very few incarcerated women at the MCI-W are assigned to rehabilitative programming or work release, according to the Department of Legislative Services^{iv}.

Equity Implications

Since the last prerelease center for women closed in 2010, incarcerated women have had no standalone prerelease center. Instead, these services are offered at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women, or MCI-W.

- According to a report on gender-based equity in prerelease programming and facilities in Maryland by the commissioner, as of December 18, 2019, there were 1,913 men and 120 women assigned to prerelease. For the female population, 17.5% were assigned to work release, compared to 9% of the male population assigned to work release. About 28% of male inmates and 4% of female inmates were assigned to supervised community-based work details. Men and women are eligible to participate in local reentry programs, but at the time of the report, **there were no women participating**.
- DLS's operating budget analysis for DPSCS highlights the lack of reentry services for women^v.

Impact

House Bill 37 would likely **impact racial, economic, and gender equity** in Maryland.

ⁱ https://dpscs.maryland.gov/community_releases/DPSCS-Community-Releases.shtml

ⁱⁱ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2025fy-budget-docs-operating-Q00-DPSCS-Overview.pdf#page=32>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://dpscs.maryland.gov/community_releases/DPSCS-Community-Releases.shtml

^{iv} <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2025fy-budget-docs-operating-Q00-DPSCS-Overview.pdf#page=32>

^v <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2025fy-budget-docs-operating-Q00-DPSCS-Overview.pdf#page=32>