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MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Education, Business and
Administration Subcommittee

Pensions Subcommittee

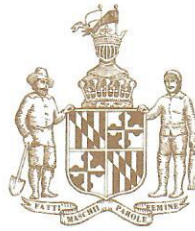
Joint Committees

Audit and Evaluation Committee

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson
SB720**

**Correctional Services Formerly Incarcerated Individual and Individual on Probation
Re-Entry Services**

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, and Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and the esteemed members of the committee, it is an honor to be before this esteemed body once again.

I am here to ask for your favorable report on SB720 Correctional Services - Formerly Incarcerated Individuals and Individuals on Probation - Re-Entry Services.

Maryland, with its rich diversity and dynamic communities, is currently grappling with a recidivism rate of 40%.

This figure highlights a pressing issue: nearly half of those released from our prisons are at risk of reoffending. This cycle affects not just the individuals and their families but also has broader implications for our communities and the state's economic well-being. In response, SB720 aims to introduce a robust re-entry program in Prince George's County, designed to offer essential support services including ID acquisition, housing, healthcare, legal aid, and employment assistance to effectively lower this rate.

The necessity of this bill is clear. The hurdles faced by individuals upon release, such as the lack of a valid ID, directly hinder their ability to reintegrate into society by complicating their efforts to find employment, secure housing, and access healthcare services. Considering Maryland's incarceration rate of 531 per 100,000 people and the significant number of individuals without a high school or GED credential, the path to reintegration is fraught with obstacles. However, access to stable employment has been shown to greatly diminish the likelihood of recidivism, highlighting the critical role of a well-structured support network like that proposed in SB720.

This bill represents more than just an attempt to reduce reoffending rates; it symbolizes a commitment to providing a second chance to those who have been marginalized. It acknowledges the untapped potential within everyone to make meaningful contributions to society when given the necessary support and opportunities. With an annual allocation of \$3,000,000 starting in 2026, this initiative reflects our state's dedication to enhancing public safety, upholding human dignity, and supporting the reintegration of individuals into society.

By endorsing SB720 we are choosing to invest in a safer, more equitable Maryland where every person has the chance to partake in and contribute to our collective success. This bill sets a foundation for a more compassionate, rehabilitative approach to public safety.

I am respectfully asking that this committee give SB720 a favorable report.