

HB 297, Office of the Attorney General - Correctional Ombudsman Unit

House Judiciary Committee

Date: March 7, 2024

From: Mary Ellen Moran

Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

HB 297 establishes a Correctional Ombudsman Unit in the Office of the Attorney General, Correctional Ombudsman Advisory Board and various reporting requirements. Many incarcerated persons have a serious mental illness, a history of substance use or both. According to the 12/21/2016 "Substance Use and Mental Health Disorder Gaps and Needs Analysis" prepared by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention: 39% of jail inmates and 28% of prison inmates were diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Of those, 89% were diagnosed as having a co-occurring substance use disorder. Therefore, the following amendments are recommended:

6-904(A)(2)

(III) APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO A STATE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL FOR THOSE WITH A MENTAL DISORDER, THE NUMBER APPROVED, THE ADMISSION WAIT TIME, CARE AND CONFINEMENT WHILE WAITING FOR ADMISSION, AND THE LENGTH OF HOSPITAL TREATMENT;

[(III)] (IV) PLANS BY AGENCIES TO EXPAND, RENOVATE, OR CLOSE FACILITIES;

[(IV)] (V) EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR INDIVIDUALS CONFINED BY ANY AGENCY; AND

[(V)] (VI) AGENCY POLICIES ON RESTRICTIVE OR PROTECTIVE HOUSING.

Section 6-907 (E)

(1) FAMILY MEMBERS OF CONFINED INDIVIDUALS INCLUDING

(i) AT LEAST ONE FAMILY MEMBER OF A CONFINED INDIVIDUAL WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AND;

(ii) AT LEAST ONE FAMILY MEMBER OF A CONFINED INDIVIDUAL WITH A HISTORY OF SUBSTANCE USE;

(5) INDIVIDUALS WITH BACKGROUNDS IN HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL WORK INCLUDING

(i) AT LEAST ONE PSYCHIATRIST SPECIALIZING IN SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AND;

(ii) AT LEAST ONE PSYCHIATRIST SPECIALIZING IN ADDICTIONS.

SECTION 6 (1)

(ii) evidence-based behavioral health and substance abuse counseling AND MEDICATION MANAGEMENT: [and]

(iii) RESTRICTIVE HOUSING FOR THOSE WITH A MENTAL DISORDER; AND

[(III)] (iv) mentoring and reentry programs; and

It is respectfully requested that the above amendments be added to HB 297 and that the Bill, as amended, be given a favorable report.