

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1037

Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services - Establishment

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: March 7, 2024

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 House Bill 1037, which would establish the Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services to identify gaps in reentry services currently provided in the State, develop a plan to establish a Division of Returning Citizens within DPSCS, and develop a plan to expand specified services for individuals in the State after release from incarceration.**

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 House Bill 1037, which takes these factors into account and seeks to identify gaps in reentry services and address them. A system that adequately 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.

For these reasons, JOTF supports House Bill 1037 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

Kam Bridges / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org