

HB0037_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
3/07/2022

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

TESTIMONY ON HB#0037 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Reentry Services for Women - Commission and Pilot Program – Establishment

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0037, Reentry Services for Women - Commission and Pilot Program – Establishment

This bill is an attempt to continue the work to successfully reintegrate formerly incarcerated women back into society by mandating comprehensive reentry plans occur to meet that goal. It will collect data to permit studying challenges faced by those formerly incarcerated women. The data collection will involve local jurisdiction's problems and solutions so service gaps can be identified. A report will be drafted for submission to the Governor and the General Assembly for action steps to be taken to resolve issues and problems identified.

The bill will also create a Reentry Pilot Program connecting formerly incarcerated women to support services to prevent recidivism related to a lack of support after release from incarceration.

Prerelease programs help incarcerated people obtain services before returning to their communities. The only such facility for women in Maryland closed in 2010. JUFJ and our partners helped pass a law in 2020 to establish a new facility, override a veto in 2021, and secure funding in 2022 and 2023.

Prerelease and post release programs help people nearing the end of their prison sentences secure employment, housing, drug treatment and mental health services, and family support. Programs with these services are available for men but not for women. There are multiple such facilities and programs for men in Maryland, but none for women. Funding gaps and lack of a dedication to getting this program going continue to communicate to our women leaving prison that their recovery and return to productive lives in society are valued less than men leaving prison.

This bill will attempt to address the imbalances in post incarceration services between men and women in Maryland. My Jewish faith teaches me that "Acting justly is a joy for the righteous but it terrifies evildoers." (Proverbs 21:15) This bill calls on the state to act justly and pursue righteousness, especially to women reentering society after incarceration.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0037.