



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

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HB1037 - Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services - Establishment - Support with Amendment

As Maryland works to reduce mass incarceration and people come home, I can't think of anything more important than to coordinate efforts and expand reentry infrastructure. This has been discussed from a local level (for example, Baltimore City recently heard a bill to create an Office of Returning Citizens within MORCA), and goes all the way to the Federal, with BJA releasing grants to support this purpose. I strongly support the creation of this task force.

My first concern is the naming of specific private nonprofits within the legislation, something that is both irregular and internally inconsistent within the bill itself. This strips the Governor's ability to staff the task force as he sees fit, taking into consideration things like organizational longevity, operating budget, percent of the population returning to their service area, number of clients, programmatic inclusion of housing, workforce, mental health and substance use services, and other considerations the Governor may have. It creates a mutual obligation between Maryland and specific private nonprofit organizations regardless of outside circumstances, and requires legislative action for the Governor to replace these specific seats should the need arise due to time, funding, or other constraints. It would be more economic to strike the overly specific page 2 lines 15-16 and amend page 2 line 22 to invite four organizations. The names of the specific individuals from the organizations on lines 15-16 could then be submitted to the Governor's Office for approval without the potential problems created by citing them by name in the legislation itself.

My second concern is the fact that only a single person with lived experience of incarceration in Maryland is included on page 2 line 5. Surely those with lived experience of reentry in Maryland should be highly included - perhaps one who served 10 years or less, one who served 10-25 years, and one who served over 25 years, honoring the important and differing experiences faced by these individuals.

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