

Sierra Robinson Testimony

HB724

I want to first thank the House committee for hearing HB0724. This Bill is a multifaceted beneficial Bill to the state of Maryland My hope is that this committee will at the end of this hearing see the many areas in which this Bill benefits the state of Maryland. The first way in which this Bill benefits Maryland is that it aligns with our Governor's campaign hope that the state of Maryland would become a second chance state. HB0724 represents that Maryland is a state that when you break our laws we will punish you, but that we also believe in and encourage correction (which is the word we use on every one of our correctional institutions). This Bill encourages and motivates correction, while also punishing criminal behavior. Twenty years is a significant amount of time for punishment. For many, that is nearly half of their lives and only those who are deemed rehabilitated will receive real consideration for a second chance. Those who continue in criminal behavior and thinking, will remain in prison because of their choice not to change their behavior and thinking.

The second benefit of passing HB0724 is that it will provide financial relief for the state and the tax paying citizens of Maryland. We currently have a shortage of correctional officers in our state, and the officers we do have are being forced to work excessive amounts of overtime. If we have people who no longer pose a threat to our society, have served a significant time of punishment, and have proven to be rehabilitated, is it truly to the benefit of the state of Maryland to continue to punish them just for the sake of punishment? Even if it is not fiscally responsible and laying a heavy burden on the officers tasked to do these job's? We know that we have a overpopulated prison population, We know that we have a shortage of staff to oversee our prison population, and we know that we have an economy that is overwhelming on our tax paying citizens. We need to find ways to cut taxes, and housing people who no longer pose a threat to our society and actually will be productive tax paying citizens themselves, as oppose to having to be take care of (\$38,000 to house a incarcerated person a year), is of great benefit to the state of Maryland on many levels.

Lastly, HB0724 could provide the opportunity for victims and their families to receive answers and apologize more frequently. This Bill removes the barriers that sometimes keeps perpetrators from ever admitting guilt. This Bill encourages admitting guilt and focuses on correction. If more perpetrators admit to their guilt, it keeps victims and their families from a bunch of post conviction court filings and truly allows a process of potential healing for victims and their families.