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Greetings,

I pray this email finds you well.

First I must apologize. A combination of learning to adapt to life and technical issues caused me to miss registering to testify on HB0297 Correctional Ombudsman.

Last year I testified before your committee about some of the issues being experienced within Maryland Prisons that require oversight to prevent them from occurring.

I served 35 years, 3 months, 8 days and 14 hours of my life serving a life + 20 year sentence in Maryland, the majority of it at the Patuxent Institution.

While there are some true professionals who are working to help rehabilitate incarcerated persons, there are unfortunately many unprofessional individuals who are abusive either verbally, mentally, and/or physically, this actually fuels recidivism.

The individuals and groups who are supporting the Correctional Ombudsman bill are not seeking to have a peek inside of Maryland's prisons, they are trying to continue a reformation process that will hold all persons accountable to the citizens and government of the State of Maryland, and by doing so, create an environment where Maryland can shift from warehousing to rehabilitation, thus lowering the recidivism in Maryland.

Having been housed at the Patuxent Institution from the late 1980's until 2022 allowed me to see two different forms of incarceration. The rehabilitation model, which if done properly, will lower recidivism, and the warehouse model which serves to promote recidivism.

When I was released, the typical correctional officer communicated by yelling at incarcerated persons, berating them, telling them how they were the lowest form of life and ingraining into incarcerated persons that they would return to prison, thus keeping them (correctional officers employed).

The physical assault of incarcerated persons is common, especially if that person is restrained by handcuffed. I personally witnessed assaults and many of them carried out on incarcerated persons being housed on the Correctional Mental Health Center-Jessup (CMHC-J).

Your favorable vote for HB0297 (Correctional Ombudsman), will begin a process of accountability to turn the focus of corrections staff from abuse to rehabilitation. Working to shift attitudes, providing a safe and professional environment where individuals are incarcerated promotes changes within incarcerated individuals that lead to lowered recidivism, developing responsible tax-paying citizens, a safer, healthier, prosperous Maryland.

I ask that you please vote favorably on HB0297 Correctional Ombudsman for a better Maryland.

Thank you,

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