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TESTIMONY ON SB#0632 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
**Correctional Services - Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services - Female
Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Prerelease Act)**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0632, Correctional Services - Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services - Female Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Prerelease Act)

This bill will accelerate the process in Maryland to provide the rehabilitative pre-release services that are lacking for female incarcerated individuals.¹

Women need reentry support for the sake of their families: As many as 75% of incarcerated women are primary caretakers of children, and 42% of mothers in state prisons nationwide may be single parents. Pre-release facilities can prepare women to reintegrate back into society by providing access to job training, employment, community resources, and comprehensive re-entry planning assistance within a less restrictive and safe environment.

The Baltimore Banner reported on December 17, 2024:²

Last year, as a new law went into effect requiring Maryland's corrections department to build a center for incarcerated women nearing release from prison, attorney Bob Burgoyne was hearing from advocates that it wasn't happening... The corrections department declined to comment ... [on] whether it has created the pre-release center for incarcerated women as required by state law.

The law requiring the corrections department to build a pre-release unit called for a "comprehensive rehabilitative pre-release facility for female inmates" and that the facility would be located in "an area, defined by the zip codes where the largest percentage of inmates will likely be released," according to a legislative synopsis. It also required the department to complete certain phases of the project by certain dates.

¹ https://gallery.mailchimp.com/41429e61f7520af42e24f6fb0/files/943f4c94-a53c-43e7-8181-fb36a358a224/Women_s_Prelease_Fact_Sheet_For_Legislators_Public.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2RzAI88vZa5DBvtitgyBLV Sqzmt-bi_kh6f2xDWxRaTWnE6wJSUY0WjLc&fbclid=IwAR0AQw8ps4Sq7zB-tBIHuPggKuTj80nuhb3o1xtEJXPCX-COJK8_TsWM-60

² <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/criminal-justice/maryland-prison-public-records-lawsuit-LKRYH74NABFTTOEYW4MWXB127A/>

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Pre-release status is defined as “the lowest security level for inmates who present the least risk of violence or escape and have established an excellent record of acceptable behavior.” Individuals granted pre-release status may have access to the community for work release, special leave, compassionate leave, and family leave.

Currently, in the state of Maryland, men have NINE separate pre-release and minimum-security facilities while women have ZERO. At the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCI-W) in Jessup, Maryland, as many as 1 in 10 women have achieved pre-release status. However, as many as 30% of the women on pre-release status have not been assigned to a work opportunity.³

This bill will work to make this mandated action by the DCC happen in an accelerated manner. It will accomplish that by altering the required location and timeline for a certain prerelease facility for female incarcerated individuals. It will create a strong requirement for the Commissioner of the Division of Correction to make certain services available to certain female incarcerated individuals. The accelerated process will require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, by July 1, 2026, to implement certain comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease services.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0632.

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/06/reduce-plastic-pollution-unep/>

² <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/12/1015296355/zero-waste-single-use-plastic-trash-recycle>

³ <https://www.out4justice.org/women-s-pre-release>