



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 632- Comprehensive Rehabilitation Pre-Release Services- Female Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Pre-Release Act)

TO: Senator Will Smith, Jr., Chair
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Karen "Candy" Clark,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland Criminal Justice Lead
DATE: February 13, 2025

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry (UULM-MD) asks for a favorable vote for **SB 632- Comprehensive Rehabilitation Pre-Release Services- Female Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Pre-Release Act)**.

I once was at a gathering of a small group of women who had recently been released from prison. One young mother of three was walking quickly around the room as she shared her story. When she was released she was not told where her children were; she had to do the footwork to locate them (each in a different place), with no transportation, food, etc. She stopped and looked intently at us and said—"I don't care what I have to do to provide for my children. I will do anything to be together. I mean anything!!!"

We can—and should—do better.

Navigating reentry from prison back into one's former environment is a challenging process. Both genders are challenged and traumatized while navigating their re-entry process. However, to aid and support their re-entry, the men are afforded 9 facilities with training programs in education, personal growth, cultural changes, and other opportunities to help them successfully transition.

Women do not.

In the women's prison there are only a few scant service programs in place just before release. Upon a woman's release, there are only a few advocacy groups—like "Women Moving Forward" to help.

Several years ago, a bill was passed to create a women's rehabilitation center. Three million dollars was specified to help build the facility. Unfortunately, nothing has happened!! Since no movement has occurred, this bill **SB 632** has been introduced to alter the required location and timeline for the creation of this life-saving program.

UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,

www.uulmmd.org info@uulmmd.org www.facebook.com/uulmmd www.Twitter.com/uulmmd

This bill sets some ground work to reactivate the creation of the Rehabilitation Center.

This legislation would require:

- A larger facility to accommodate the greatest number of women.
- The purchase of three acres of land.
- The location, property, and site plan would be finalized before December 31, 2025
- The Center would begin Construction on the Center by July 1, 2026, and be fully operational by June 1, 2027

The facility will offer the latest up to date services for the women such as:

- Gender-responsive services,
- Educational programs - including possible community college credits or vocational skills, workforce training, and job placement
- Counseling - trauma, mental health, and substance disorder treatment
- Developing individualized and comprehensive reentry plans involving community connections to reduce barriers to obtaining housing, education, jobs, child care and welfare, legal advocacy, transportation and other needs...

UULM-MD asks for your support for SB 632

Thank you,

Candy Clark

Karen "Candy" Clark

Criminal Justice Reform Lead Advocate for UULM-MD

UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,

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