



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HB 1198 – Correctional Services – Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services – Female Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Prerelease Act)

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: March 4, 2025

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) strongly supports HB 1198, The Monica Cooper Prerelease Act, which seeks to ensure that incarcerated women have access to comprehensive, gender-responsive prerelease services. This bill is a necessary step toward equity in the criminal justice system and will help reduce recidivism, improve reentry outcomes, and strengthen communities across Maryland.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) has long advocated for a criminal justice system that prioritizes rehabilitation, reentry support, and alternatives to incarceration when appropriate. As formalized in its national position, the League believes that effective reentry programs—including access to education, vocational training, mental health services, and housing assistance—are critical in reducing recidivism and improving public safety. Furthermore, the League is committed to eliminating systemic racial, ethnic, and gender biases within the criminal justice system, recognizing that marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by incarceration and lack of reentry services.

Currently, Maryland lacks a dedicated prerelease facility for women, despite the existence of such programs for men. This systemic gap places formerly incarcerated women at a significant disadvantage, often releasing them without the structured support necessary for a successful transition back into society. HB 1198 addresses this inequity by ensuring that incarcerated women have access to the same comprehensive prerelease services that are available to men.

[Studies](#) show that when individuals receive adequate prerelease support, they are significantly less likely to reoffend. Providing structured reentry programs for women will not only benefit them and their families but will also enhance public safety and reduce the financial burden associated with reincarceration. Ensuring equitable access to prerelease services is a fundamental step toward a fairer, more effective criminal justice system.

LWVMD urges a favorable report on HB 1198. We thank the committee for its consideration.