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Legislative District 10  
Baltimore County  
—  
Judiciary Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am here today to strongly urge your **favorable vote** on **HB 1157**, a crucial first step toward reforming Maryland's correctional system. This bill is not about rushing immediate reforms, but about equipping us with the knowledge, data, and insights we need to drive meaningful change in the future.

Maryland's correctional system has long been plagued by **systemic issues**—issues that, if left unaddressed, continue to harm incarcerated individuals, the staff who work within these facilities, and the state as a whole. Overcrowded prisons, outdated infrastructure, insufficient staffing, and limited access to **mental health services** and **rehabilitative programs** have created an environment where **rehabilitation efforts are stifled**, and **recidivism rates** remain high. These challenges affect not only those incarcerated but also the dedicated staff who work tirelessly under increasingly difficult circumstances.

However, we cannot address these challenges effectively without first having a **clear, data-driven understanding** of the root causes. We must understand where the system is failing, and we must do so through **evidence-based analysis**. This is exactly what **HB 1157** seeks to provide.

The core of **HB 1157** is to require the **Office of the Correctional Ombudsman** to hire an **independent consultant** who will conduct a comprehensive assessment of Maryland's entire correctional system. This assessment will be thorough, evaluating the **facility infrastructure**, **staffing levels**, **programming**, and **health services**—all of which are critical to the rehabilitative success of the system.

But what makes this bill truly impactful is its commitment to gathering feedback from those most affected by the system. Through interviews, surveys, and public hearings, incarcerated individuals and correctional staff will have a **direct voice** in the assessment process. These are the people who understand the system in its most intimate form, and their experiences are invaluable in shaping the future of Maryland's correctional system.

The goal of **HB 1157** is **not to implement immediate changes** but to ensure that we have the **critical data and analysis** needed to make informed, strategic reforms down the line. The assessment will include a **cost-benefit analysis** of current practices, as well as a **comparative**

**analysis** with best practices from other states that have successfully addressed similar challenges. This information will provide us with a **roadmap** for improvement, offering actionable recommendations based on **evidence and real-world experiences**.

The assessment will not only highlight weaknesses in the system but also point out **strengths** that we can build on. The findings will come with **clear timelines** for implementing changes, as well as a strategy for **ongoing evaluation**, ensuring that reforms are measured and continue to evolve based on the results.

By supporting **HB 1157**, you are not just supporting a bill that gathers data; you are **supporting the future of Maryland's correctional system**. A future where decisions are driven by facts, where reforms are based on the actual needs of incarcerated individuals and staff, and where we are creating a more **humane, effective, and efficient** system.

This is a critical opportunity for us to make an informed, data-driven approach to reform. The assessment laid out in **HB 1157** is the foundation upon which future improvements will be made, improving the lives of both incarcerated individuals and the dedicated correctional officers who work tirelessly within our facilities.

I ask for your **support** in moving **HB 1157** forward. Let's begin with the facts so that we can make the right, informed decisions for the future of Maryland's correctional system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "N. Scott Phillips", written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

N. Scott Phillips, Esq.