



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
Office of the Secretary

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BILL: HOUSE BILL 1198

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

STATE OF MARYLAND

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EXPLANATION: House Bill 1198 alters the location of the Women's Prerelease Center, as well as the timeline for the Department to construct it. The bill requires the prerelease center to be located in Baltimore City on a site that is not less than three acres in land area.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department to identify a location, acquire property and design a site for the prerelease unit for women before December 31, 2025; begin construction or renovation of the facility before July 1, 2026 and begin operating the prerelease center by June 1, 2027.

Finally, the bill requires the Department to provide evidence based and gender responsive programming available to all female incarcerated individuals on prerelease status and all women at the prerelease center for women, including ensuring that each female incarcerated individual at the prerelease center for women has secured stable housing that is reasonably expected to remain available to the individual and her dependents for at least 1 year.

COMMENTS:

- Chapter 16 of 2021 established a mandate for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to build, operate and provide status reports on a standalone prerelease facility dedicated to the female incarcerated individuals returning to the community.
- The Department of General Services (DGS) and the DPSCS collaboratively seek to meet both the letter and the spirit of the legislation and aim to build a gender responsive prerelease facility for women returning to the community from the Division of Correction.
- Capital construction and procurement is a function of the DGS and reliant upon Department of Budget and Management capital funding. Under the oversight of the DGS, a consultant team has conducted a population forecast and needs assessment, developed a preliminary staffing model, and assisted in the creation of a functional

space program consistent with the requirements of DGS and the State of Maryland.

- DGS project oversight and management have been moving this project forward. A site location has been identified that meets the criteria of the legislative mandate. This process conducted required more than a year to finalize a location. A design RFP was issued on February 7, 2025.
- The location changes mandated by HB1198 will effectively reset the entire project from start to finish, requiring a complete overhaul of all phases, and programming and approval process with DGS and DBM. The cost of securing a suitable site within Baltimore City on three acres is uncertain, and it remains unclear whether demolition will be necessary to meet this new requirement.
- Possible variables that would contribute to delays:
 - If there are existing facilities on the selected site, Demolition will add both cost and time to the project.
 - Utility availability (Power, Water, Sewer, Communications) - Site survey is the only way to determine the availability, therefore DPSCS cannot quantify the impact.
 - Environmental Impact statement - If the project contributes to impermeable surfaces the design documents will have to go through the entire review process by MDE. This could be an additional 6 months to project a schedule.
 - Permitting through the city for utilities and storm water management could all add to the cost to construct.
- The identification of a new location would require a new survey and procurement. Community outreach would have to occur, a necessary component to overcome potential community resistance to construction of a correctional facility in the chosen location. Furthermore, the programming process pushes back the 18 month design process. The bid process for a contractor to construct requires a minimum of 6 months to award a new contract and 18-24 months to construct.
- Should HB1198 become law, the DPSCS estimates a 5-year time frame to reach occupancy without delays.
- The purpose of the prerelease center for women is to provide female incarcerated individuals with evidence-based and innovative programs that address clinical and criminogenic needs as these women in custody transition to the community. Expansive gender responsive programming

and services have been integrated in the current program for the rerelease center for women, named the Life Skills Reentry Center for Women.

- With regards to the requirement of ensuring stable housing, the Department will prioritize housing services, however, it is not responsible for providing housing once the sentence is completed and the individual is no longer under the Department's care or custody.

CONCLUSION: For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates House Bill 1198.