

Judiciary Committee

HB 0401

1/31/25

IN SUPPORT

I, Danielle Williams, am a licensed clinical social worker in the state of Maryland and The District of Columbia. I am a resident of Owings Mills, Maryland (Baltimore County), and I volunteer with the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MARJ).

As a licensed clinical social worker, I've had the pleasure of working with individuals within the correctional institution and observed first-hand the grievances and complaints that often go unheard, or circumstances in which there is no action. For this reason, I am in support of a Correctional Ombudsman.

Primarily, the biggest concern that I have observed is the lack of medical care/treatment. Many people in the correctional system are in need of medical care for surgery, X rays for fractures and broken bones, but oftentimes appointments are missed, and routine medical care is denied. Research shows that for every year that someone spends in prison their life expectancy is cut by two years and Mass incarceration multiplies that impact on a societal level.

Secondly, an area of concern is the cost associated with medical care. People in prison are required to pay co-pays of \$2-4, to see medical even though some may not have jobs due to long wait lists and lengthy sentences which creates a barrier to seeking treatment. Some have to consider their options before even scheduling a medical appointment.

I have a sibling who is currently incarcerated in Western Correctional Institution (WCI). He had a scheduled appointment for surgery prior to incarceration. He has a torn ACL which requires surgery in order to properly heal. Left untreated, he will continue to limp until he is released and is able to seek proper medical care. He has repeatedly submitted requests to see the surgeon and has yet to receive a response. Subsequently, the lack of medical care often leads to secondary problems such as dependency to pain meds and other psychological problems.

The horrendous state of health care behind bars contributes enormously to a decline in overall health and life expectancy. Hence, A correctional ombudsman will offer inmates an outlet for complaints and grievances about prison conditions and treatment. Moreover, a correctional ombudsman will ensure that policy and procedures are executed for every incarcerated

individual. I sincerely ask that you consider these unfortunate circumstances and vote in favor of the bill.

Sincerely,
Danielle Williams, LCSW-C
Maryland Alliance For Justice Reform
Daniellewilliams.lcsw@gmail.com
Danielle Williams