



TESTIMONY FOR HB1157

Correctional Services - Assessment of State Correctional System

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Phillips

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB1157 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members recognize the critical challenges within Maryland's correctional system, including infrastructure, staffing, and overall effectiveness. These issues affect the safety, rehabilitation, and well-being of incarcerated individuals, as well as the efficiency of correctional facilities. HB1157 addresses the urgent need for a comprehensive assessment of the correctional system.

The bill mandates the Office of the Correctional Ombudsman to engage an independent consultant for a thorough assessment by October 1, 2026. This assessment will cover facility layout, cell design, recreation areas, technology, security systems, staffing ratios, a cost-benefit analysis, and a comparative analysis benchmarking Maryland's practices with leading states. The consultant must provide a written report with findings and recommendations by October 1, 2028, with the assessment's status and implementation progress included in the Office's annual report.

By identifying deficiencies and proposing remedial steps, HB1157 aims to enhance the safety and well-being of incarcerated individuals and staff, contribute to public safety, and reduce recidivism rates. Ultimately, the bill seeks to create a more effective and humane correctional system that benefits all Marylanders.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition wholeheartedly supports this bill and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.