



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

Low House Office Building, 6 Bladen Street, Room 200 · Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
Phone 410-841-3374 | 301-858-3374 · 800-492-7122 Ext. 3374 · Fax 410-841-3342 | 301-858-3342  
latino.caucus@house.state.md.us · www.mdlatinocaucus.org

ASHANTI MARTINEZ, CHAIR  
GABRIEL ACEVERO, VICE-CHAIR  
DENI TAVERAS, TREASURER  
JOE VOGEL, SECRETARY  
JASON A. AVILA GARCIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair  
Delegate Sandy J. Bartlett, Vice Chair  
Judiciary Committee Members  
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus  
DATE: March 12, 2025  
RE: HB 1198 – Correctional Services – Comprehensive  
Rehabilitative Prerelease Services – Female Incarcerated  
Individuals (The Monica Cooper Prelease Act)

### **The MLLC supports HB 1198 – Correctional Services – Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services – Female Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Prelease Act)**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1198.

The following bill alters the required location and timeline for the design, construction, and operation of the prerelease unit for women within the Division of Corrections. Specifically, it requires the prerelease unit to be located in Baltimore City and pushes the date to identify a location, acquire a property, and design a site plan for the prerelease unit for women by July 1, 2026 and begin operations and providing services in this facility by June 1, 2027.

The bill also expands the requirements for the comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease services that must be made available to female incarcerated individuals at the prerelease unit. These services must use evidence-based and innovative programs and practices to ensure female individuals have access to public health benefits, secure and stable housing, education, training, or employment activities, and pertinent documents such as a birth certificate. By establishing a definition of gender-responsive services, programs and services within the prerelease unit will better account for and recognize the differences between men and women in psychological development, socialization, culture, exposure to trauma, life experiences, and criminogenic risks to support successful reentry, recovery, and recidivism reduction.

HB1198 seeks to refine the guidelines and deadlines for the comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease center for women, as required to be operated by the Commissioner of Correction within DPSCS under Chapter 16 of 2021. Across Maryland, women are denied access to prerelease programs that provide access to job opportunities and other vital re-entry services.<sup>1</sup> Latina women in Maryland are incarcerated at disproportionate rates, and the insufficient support for women with prerelease status hinders their successful reintegration into society, ultimately contributing to higher rates of recidivism within the Latino community. By setting a location and establishing a timeline for the design,

---

<sup>1</sup> [#25 Injustice for Incarcerated Women in Maryland after State Defunds Prerelease Facility](#)

construction, and operation of a women's prerelease center in Maryland, this bill plays a significant role in ensuring that all women have access to vital and expansive re-entry services.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1198.