



**The Maryland Office of the Correctional Ombudsman
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TO: Delegate Melissa Wells, Chair and Members of the
Government, Labor and Elections Committee

FROM: Yvonne Briley-Wilson, Esquire, Maryland Correctional Ombudsman
The Maryland Office of the Correctional Ombudsman

DATE: February 19, 2026

REGARDING: SUPPORT – HB0612

Good afternoon, Chair Wells, Vice-Chair Kerr and committee members of the Government, Labor and Elections Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB0108.

I am Yvonne Briley-Wilson, Esquire, the Maryland Correctional Ombudsman. I am here this afternoon testifying on behalf of the Maryland Office of the Correctional Ombudsman (OCO) in support of HB0612 Correctional Education and Workforce Skills Training Programs. As the agency that provides oversight to the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), it is the mission of the Office of the Correctional Ombudsman to function in transparency, accountability, and impartiality, ensuring that incarcerated adults and detained and/or adjudicated youth are treated fairly, with dignity, humanity and respect. OCO emphasizes the importance of collaboration among the agencies we oversee, the individuals in their care, and the staff working within them. We also value the strength of our community partnerships and prioritize the reduction of recidivism and the safety of all Marylanders.

The OCO supports HB0612 because it aligns with the mission of OCO. HB0108 seeks to ensure continuation, expansion, and require appropriate funding to support the Certified Peer Recovery program within DPSCS facilities. The CPRS program operates within DPSCS and is supported by the Department of Labor. The concept of CPRS program is to allow those behind the wall to cultivate transformative change in one another by utilizing their own lived experiences, proper and intensive training, the camaraderie that is established as a result of incarcerated individuals working toward their common goals, and the commitment to improve themselves whether they are being released from behind the wall or not.

An example of this program is currently operating within Jessup Correctional Institute (JCI) as well as other DPSCS facilities where the OCO staff has had the opportunity on numerous occasions to interact, offer support, and encourage incarcerated individuals participating in this

program as Certified Peer Recovery Specialist. Their experience with the program is not only beneficial to the lives of the incarcerated individuals they mentor and support daily, but it also benefits the incarcerated individual providing the mentorship. This is especially true for IIs serving longer or even life sentences. I have been directly told that it provides a sense of purpose. It not only provides for successful recovery, but cultivates professional skills, and commitment to serve and benefit others.

This bill seeks to codify and establish the legacy of the program and the positive and transformative legacy for those participating in the program. Lastly for the participants that are returning to the community, it aids in the development of professional and transferable skills. It represents a win win for incarcerated individuals, DPSCS, your constituents, our community and the state. HB0612 demonstrates our common commitment to rehabilitation, second chances, and positive and productive outcomes for those behind the wall and those awaiting their return; your constituents and their families.

I encourage your favorable support of HB0612 to ensure the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Program of DPSCS has the opportunity to secure permanency, expand and provide effective and consistent backing.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Office of the Correctional Ombudsman's support of HB0612.

I welcome any questions you may have at this time.