



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 22:

Correctional Services - Incarcerated Individuals - Identification Cards and Driver's Licenses

TO: Members of the House Government, Labor and Elections Committee

FROM: Dwan Burton

My name is Dwan Burton, and I am the Deputy Director of Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ), a Baltimore based grassroots organization founded in 2011 and led by people directly impacted by the criminal legal system. Out for Justice supports House Bill 22 because it addresses a basic and persistent barrier to successful reentry: people being released from incarceration without valid identification.

Out for Justice works with individuals who have completed their sentences and are returning home ready to rebuild their lives. Too often, we see people leave custody without an identification card or driver's license, even when they entered the facility with valid identification. Without ID, people are immediately blocked from employment, housing, health care, public benefits, and even required supervision appointments. These barriers do not promote accountability or public safety. They undermine reentry before it even begins.

House Bill 22 makes a necessary and practical correction. It requires correctional facilities to return valid identification or driver's licenses to individuals who entered custody with them and establishes a clear process to ensure that individuals are released with identification in hand. The bill also makes clear that these requirements may not be used to delay release. This is a straightforward policy change that reflects fairness, administrative common sense, and respect for human dignity.

Releasing people without identification does not make communities safer. It increases instability, delays access to employment and services, and creates unnecessary obstacles that can lead to further system involvement. These harms fall most heavily on communities already disproportionately impacted by incarceration and reentry barriers.

At Out for Justice, we believe reintegration must be real, not symbolic. If the state expects people to successfully return home, it must remove preventable barriers that serve no legitimate purpose. Access to identification is one of the most basic requirements for lawful participation in society. House Bill 22 acknowledges that reality and takes an important step toward supporting successful reentry.

For these reasons, Out for Justice respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 22. Thank you for your time and consideration.