

**TO:**

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair

Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair

Members of the *Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee*:

**FROM:**

Anthony Wazir Muhammad

We Our Us, Community Engagement/Re-Entry Specialist

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**RE: SENATE BILL 61**

*Division of Correction - Release Preparation Program*

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

January 26, 2026

Greetings,

I respectfully submit this written testimony for the official record to express my **SUPPORT** for *Senate Bill 61*.

I am a returning citizen and justice impacted individual. At the age of 15, I was arrested for two homicide charges in the City of Baltimore. At the age of 17, I was convicted and sentenced to life plus a consecutive 20-years in prison. Ultimately, I served a total of 29-YEARS, 7-MONTHS, & 29-DAYS before I was released under the *Maryland Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA)* on September 20, 2022.

I am one of many JRA releases who have successfully reintegrated back into society, and who collectively share a less than 4% recidivism rate. Both individually and collectively, many of the JRA releases, and other returning citizens as well, are doing phenomenal work in the community, especially in the area of providing re-entry services to fellow returning citizens.

Since the very first day of my release, I have served as a Community Engagement/Re-Entry Specialist with *We Our Us*, where I use my lived experience as a credible messenger doing community violence intervention and directing other returning citizens to key re-entry services and programs.

The Secretary of the Maryland Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services, Ms. Carolyn J. Scruggs, has established a "*Lived Experience Committee*" (LEC), which consist of returning citizens and justice impacted individual who are now productive members of society. The LEC provides limited opportunities for returning citizens to reenter Maryland's Division of Correction (DOC) to speak to inmates and provide re-entry support.

The LEC is operated by the current DPSCS Director of Re-Entry Services, Ms. Ellen Rappaport. Although I am not a direct member of the LEC, on behalf of *We Our Us*, I have collaborated with LEC members, and DPSCS Re-Entry Fairs, to provide reentry services.

The goal of Senate Bill 61 is basically to codify the LEC into Maryland law and provide the necessary funding to allow returning citizens and justice impacted individuals to reenter Maryland's DOC under appropriate circumstances to provide reentry services – without the current offense restrictions and supervision limitations.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 61. Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation.