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February 25, 2026

TO: The Honorable William Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Tiffany Clark
Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: Senate Bill 944 – Correctional Services – Reentry Readiness Program

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports in concept Senate Bill 944 – Correctional Services – Reentry Readiness Program. Senate Bill 944 establishes a structured, multi-agency program within DPSCS to ensure that individuals approaching release from incarceration receive assistance in obtaining identification documents and connecting to workforce and vocational programming before they leave state custody.

This legislation directly supports our efforts to advance equitable reentry outcomes and reduce the recidivism rate that continues to affect too many Marylanders. The period immediately following release is one of the highest-risk windows for reincarceration, and the lack of a valid ID or employment pathway on the day of release is among the most preventable barriers to successful reintegration. By codifying pre-release assistance timelines and requiring coordinated action across DPSCS, the MVA, the Division of Vital Records, and the Department of Labor, SB 944 reflects a practical, evidence-consistent approach to closing that gap.

We appreciate the General Assembly's work on this important policy and welcome the opportunity to share our perspective. The OAG notes, however, several areas where the Committee may wish to refine the bill before final passage.

First, DPSCS has already established MOUs with the MVA and the Division of Vital Records for providing vital documents to returning citizens, operates the Reentry Passport system for pre-release document access, and partners with the Department of Labor on correctional education and workforce programming across 18 facilities.

Second, DPSCS reentry specialists currently begin individualized pre-release planning approximately 180 days before release, twice the bill's 90-day trigger. Aligning the statutory timeline with this existing practice would make the legislation more ambitious and consistent with the evidence base for effective reentry intervention.

Third, and most critically, it is our understanding that DPSCS currently has only 11 reentry specialist positions statewide, converted from case manager roles without dedicated appropriations. Without a funding mechanism to support adequate staffing, the bill risks creating a statutory mandate that DPSCS cannot fulfill in practice.

Subject to these concerns, the OAG believes SB 944 takes an important step toward ensuring that returning citizens have the foundational tools they need to succeed.

Cc: Members of the Committee