

HB022_FAVORABLE_OPD.pdf

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Position: FAV



NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

HANNIBAL KEMERER
CHIEF OF STAFF

ELIZABETH HILLIARD
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**BILL: HB022: Correctional Services – Incarcerated Individuals – Identification Cards,
Driver’s Licenses, and Birth Certificates**

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: April 1, 2026

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee vote favorably on HB022.

This Bill requires the Commissioner of Correction to determine whether an incarcerated individual is in possession of certain personal identification documents upon intake into custody; if they do, the Commissioner shall facilitate the safekeeping of those documents and return them prior to or upon the individual’s release. If the individual does not possess these documents, the Commissioner shall provide an opportunity to the incarcerated individual to apply for and obtain the documents a few months prior to their release. The essential personal identification documents included are birth certificates, social security cards, and driver’s licenses or state-issued photo identification cards.

The provisions proposed in this Bill will provide simple yet essential assistance for returning citizens to help ensure a smooth transition back into the community. The process for obtaining these identifying documents can be difficult, confusing, and time consuming for a returning citizen without assistance. Beginning the process *after* release only further delays success in the community. The pre-release assistance proposed in this Bill will streamline the process by providing a clear pathway for returning citizens to obtain essential documents prior to their approaching release date. By assisting returning citizens with these processes *before* they are actually released, the program proposed in this Bill will be a significant step towards ensuring a successful return to the community.

Many incarcerated individuals—especially those who have served sentences that span several years or even decades—can struggle upon release without access to immediate housing, employment, or any source of income. As public defenders, we see the practical challenges that people released from incarceration must navigate, oftentimes on their own, that can feel insurmountable. Without basic personal identification documents, essential tasks such as applying for an apartment, opening a bank account, applying for a job, or accessing transportation can quickly become overwhelming and prohibitive logistical obstacles. Having a valid state identification and other essential documents upon release is an easy step that sets up returning citizens for success.

Eliminating these barriers to accessing basic necessities will allow for a smoother and more efficient transition to independence. For instance, benefits such as SNAP and Temporary Cash Assistance allow individuals to purchase groceries, pay for public transportation fare, purchase clothing necessary for job interviews or for their workplace, and cover necessary medical expenses while they work to establish long-term employment; but these programs require official identification documents to apply. For people with mental or physical disabilities or chronic illness, having a State ID can be essential to accessing medical care and coverage from the moment they are released, and this can have a profound impact on the success of their transition back into the community. For most people, it is almost always necessary to provide official identifying documents in order to obtain housing or employment. These are foundational requirements for establishing stability and finding success in the community.

Notably, stable housing and employment upon release from incarceration have been found to reduce recidivism.¹ While it is in the best interest of the returning citizens to provide the most basic resources that enable them to secure stable jobs and housing, it is therefore also in the interest of the community at large by contributing to reduced rates of re-offending. This commonsense measure will ensure that when returning citizens step beyond the walls of the prison they are equipped with the basic identity documents most of us carry in our wallets every day that they will need to rebuild their

¹ Kolbeck, S., Lopez, S., & Bellair, P., Does Stable Employment after Prison Reduce Recidivism Irrespective of Prior Employment and Offending? *Justice Quarterly*, 41(1), 38–61 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2023.2201330>), available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07418825.2023.2201330>; Jacobs LA & Gottlieb A., THE EFFECT OF HOUSING CIRCUMSTANCES ON RECIDIVISM: Evidence From a Sample of People on Probation in San Francisco. *Crim Justice Behav.* 2020 Sep. 47(9): 1097-1115 (doi: 10.1177/0093854820942285), available at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8496894/>.

lives. Providing an opportunity for returning citizens to obtain necessary identification documents prior to their release can contribute to enhanced safety and stability for all.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to vote in favor of HB022.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division
Authored by: Allison Stillinghagan, Assistant Public Defender, allison.stillinghagan1@maryland.gov

HB0022_OFJ_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: D'wan Burton

Position: FAV



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 22:

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

DATE: April 1, 2026

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings 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.

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Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV



**HB 22 - Correctional Services - Incarcerated Individuals - Identification Cards and Driver's Licenses
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

April 1, 2026

SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 22. This bill will require a correctional facility to release people with a non-driver identification card or a driver's license issued by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA).

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Returning citizens face immediate and significant challenges, and many are released with no income, no food assistance, and interrupted health coverage. They also are often left without the proper identification or documentation required to apply for benefits, secure housing, or find employment. All of these factors contribute to decreasing financial stability for returning citizens and increasing recidivism. Economic and financial instability are one of the greatest barriers to successful reentry for individuals leaving incarceration.

HB 22 helps address this issue by ensuring that individuals that came in with identification, will leave with identification.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 22.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope

HB22 Correctional Services - Incarcerated Individu

Uploaded by: Matthew Schindler

Position: FAV

MATTHEW J. SCHINDLER
Legislative District 2B
Washington County

Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and Ethics
Labor

Local Government/Bi-County Agencies
and Administration

House Study Group on Economic Stability



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 221
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3125
800-492-7122 Ext. 3125
Matthew.Schindler@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB22: Correctional Services - Incarcerated Individuals - Identification Cards and Driver's Licenses

Judicial Proceedings

April 1st, 2026: 1:00 PM

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and honorable members of the committee for the record, I am Delegate Matthew J. Schindler, and I am here to testify in support of House Bill 22.

House Bill 22 ensures that when an individual is released from incarceration, they leave with something fundamental to successful reentry: a valid Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration–issued identification card or driver’s license.

This bill is about removing a needless barrier at the very moment we ask people to succeed.

Without state-issued identification, returning citizens are effectively locked out of society. They cannot apply for jobs, secure housing, access healthcare, enroll in education or workforce training programs, or even obtain many basic social services. We release individuals back into our communities and expect them to become stable, productive residents—yet deny them the most important document required to do so. That is not accountability; it is a setup for failure.

This is not a handout—it is a practical, commonsense investment in outcomes we all want: fewer repeat offenses, stronger workforce participation, and safer communities.

Other states, including California, Texas, Illinois, and North Carolina—have already recognized that identification upon release is a best practice. Research consistently shows that access to ID dramatically improves a person’s ability to engage with employment, housing, and support systems. The U.S. Department of Justice has identified ID assistance programs as an effective tool in reducing recidivism by stabilizing individuals during the most vulnerable period after release.

Maryland has long prided itself on smart, evidence-based policy. HB22 aligns with that tradition. If we are serious about reentry, rehabilitation, and public safety, then we must ensure people leave incarceration with the basic tools required to succeed.

For those reasons, I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report on House Bill 22.

Respectfully,

Matthew J. Schindler

Delegate Matthew J. Schindler

District 2B