



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of Government & Legislative Affairs

BILL: HOUSE BILL 935

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: House Bill 935 seeks to eliminate the requirement to place a prerelease unit for women located in or adjacent to the zip codes where the largest percentage of incarcerated individuals will likely be released.

HB 935 provides that a prerelease unit be located in Baltimore City on a site that is no less than 3 acres and not within a 1-mile radius of an existing correctional facility. Additionally, a prerelease unit shall accommodate services for no fewer than 1.25 times the number of women who were eligible for prerelease status in 2024. Finally, the Department is required to provide gender-responsive services to eligible individuals prior to the final construction and occupation of the facility.

- After careful consideration of several locations, DPSCS, along with the Department of General Services (DGS) chose a site for the prerelease center for women also known as the New Life Skills and Reentry Center (LSRCW) that complies with the 2020 legislation and has been making significant progress on the project.
- The bidding process for the architecture and design was completed by early Fall 2025.
- Upon approval of the architecture and design by the Board of Public Works, the design of the prerelease unit would be currently underway and projected to issue a notice to proceed with construction by November 2028.
- The Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act (SB 684, Chapter 16, 2020) passed in March 2020, as an unfunded mandate and is now fully funded at the estimated cost of \$107 million.
- DPSCS and the DGS convened a meeting with leaders of the Women's Prerelease Equity Coalition and formerly justice impacted women in November 2025 to discuss concerns over the location of the LSRCW.

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- As a result, the planned construction for the prerelease center to be located at 717 Forrest St., has been temporarily paused due to concerns of the Women's Prerelease Equity Coalition regarding the location.
- Relocating the LSRCW to a location at least 1-mile away from a correctional facility and on property of no less than 3 acres in size, will most likely result in additional funding needed to complete the project and complicate the search for a suitable site.
- Prior to the selection of the current location, there was a suitable site for the facility on the west side of the city, but local community groups collaborated to block construction after learning about the plan.
- Additionally, a new site for the LSRCW could lead to opposition by the surrounding community.
- In addition to the costs of searching for and purchasing a new property, the new timeline is at least a year and most likely longer to secure a new site. Upon acquisition of the site, the planning process will need to start over from the beginning.
- Furthermore, the requirement to accommodate services for no fewer than 1.25 times the number of women who were eligible for prerelease status in 2024 will increase costs for the LSRCW as it will require additional bed space.
- It is important to note that the incarcerated population is not static and fluctuates based on releases and new intakes. The appropriate methodology should be 1.25 times the daily average pre-release population. This would amount to a capacity of 103 beds.
- The prerelease population for incarcerated women has been in steady decline from 165 incarcerated women in 2016 to 86 in 2025.
- In addition, the bill requires gender responsive programming be provided to meet the specific needs of incarcerated women with prerelease status. However, all incarcerated women housed at MCIW have specific needs that should be addressed prior to release.
- It is important to note that prerelease is a security classification for incarcerated individuals who pose the least risk of violence and escape, and have a history of satisfactory institutional behavior.

- Gender responsive programming is provided to all incarcerated women in all security classifications, not just prerelease as women are released from maximum, medium, minimum security classifications.
- It is beneficial and important for incarcerated women, in all security classification, to engage in programming together as it provides a safe and supportive and therapeutic environment. Collaborative programming helps to foster trust, build pro-social skills, and reduce the psychological stress of incarceration.
- In FY25, 156 incarcerated women were released from MCIW from maximum, medium and minimum security classifications versus 85 who were classified as prerelease.
- In compliance with the Gender Response Reprerelase Act, Project FRESH was established which is a specialized, gender-responsive program dedicated to providing comprehensive support both during incarceration and after release.
- This comprehensive approach addresses a wide range of reentry needs—including employment, housing, behavioral health, and life skills—providing a stable foundation for successful reintegration into the community.
- In addition to the Project FRESH programming, incarcerated women housed on the prerelease unit have access to a range of reentry focused programming available throughout the facility, including a baby bonding program, which allows mothers with children aged 3 and under to engage in special visits in a nursery environment, promoting bonding and healthy attachment.
- DPSCS hosted representatives of the Montgomery County Women’s Democratic Club at the MCIW and the Dorsey Run Correctional Facility for a tour of the variety of programming and resources provided at the prerelease housing units for both men and women.
- Additional gender responsive programs are expected to be added during the course of the year.

CONCLUSION: For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates House Bill 935.