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### POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**BILL:** Senate Bill 689 – Task Force to Study Post-release Services and Requirements (Bri’s Law) on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services – Requirement Alterations and Extension of Report Deadline

**FROM:** Maryland Office of the Public Defender

**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 689. This bill takes an important step toward strengthening Maryland’s approach to reentry by establishing the Task Force to Study Post-release Services and Requirements and directing it to review each type of release from incarceration, examine the post-release programs and requirements aimed at preventing recidivism, and make recommendations to improve post-release programming and requirements.

Senate Bill 689 also strengthens the State’s broader reentry planning by altering the responsibilities of the Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services. As amended, that task force must identify existing reentry services, identify service gaps, assess markers of successful reentry, develop a plan for a Division of Returning Citizens within DPSCS, and develop a plan to expand services after release. Those services include housing, employment, socialization, health, legal assistance, education, and coordination with county reentry programs, as well as studying programs and services to prevent recidivism after release from incarceration.

For the clients represented by the Office of the Public Defender, these issues are not abstract policy concerns. The stability of the initial post-release period often determines whether an individual can successfully reintegrate into family and community life or instead faces avoidable barriers that increase the risk of further system involvement. Meaningful reentry requires more than release alone. It requires deliberate attention to housing, employment, health care, legal needs, education, and local coordination. Senate Bill 689 moves the State toward a fuller and more realistic understanding of what successful reentry demands.

This legislation aligns closely with the Maryland Justice Partnership (MJP), a cross-sector initiative by the Maryland Office of the Public Defender aimed at reforming the criminal legal system. The MJP is grounded in the principle that durable reform requires cross-sector coordination, practical planning, and shared accountability for implementation. Senate Bill 689 reflects the same approach by focusing on statewide assessment, identifying gaps, structured planning, and recommendations for stronger reentry supports. It fits naturally within the MJP’s emphasis on community reintegration and long-term stability as essential components of public safety.

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**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 689.**

**Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.**

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