

TESTIMONY FOR SB0187

Correctional Services – Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services –

Female Incarcerated Individuals

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am a resident of District 41 and the President of Be the Change, a social justice organization. Our organization has been writing in favor of a pre-release center for women for years and we hope that this very important facility will finally be built.

The bill updates the required specifications for a dedicated prerelease facility for female incarcerated individuals, to include a location in Baltimore where so many women come from and have family. It directs the Department of General Services to oversee and fast-track the procurement process for its construction. It also requires the Commissioner of Correction to make gender-responsive services available—programming that recognizes the distinct experiences, trauma histories, and reentry needs of women. Finally, the bill ensures that this work moves forward without further delay.

Maryland has talked for years about the need for a women’s prerelease center, yet the absence of such a facility continues to harm women who are preparing to return home. Without access to trauma-informed counseling, job training, parenting support, and other reentry services, women face higher barriers to stability, employment, and family reunification. SB0187 provides the structure and accountability needed to finally deliver on the state’s commitment to these individuals.

If we do not want to perpetuate criminal system involvement, women need to be able to reunite with their children as soon as possible and with the information and support they need to be good parents.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0187.

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Be the Change Bmore