

Senate Bill 187 - Correctional Services - Comprehensive Rehabilitative Reentry Services - Female Incarcerated Individuals

Position: Letter of Information

Committee: House Judiciary Committee

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From: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Department of General Services (DGS) is providing this Letter of Information for the Committee's consideration of HB 187, as amended in the Senate.

This legislation, as introduced, proposed significant revisions to state law governing the establishment of a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease unit for women operated by the Division of Corrections within the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). As amended, SB 187 would impose even more restrictive timelines and deadlines for agency actions, raising the level of concern that the bill's provisions would be highly unlikely to be completed by these revised dates.

This bill would mandate that DGS take expedited actions leading to the construction of a new correctional facility in which comprehensive rehabilitative reentry services are provided to female incarcerated individuals. Specifically, SB 187 would require DGS to provide the General Assembly with a timeline of deliverables for the planning, design, and construction of the reentry facility, *and* issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the planning, design and construction of the facility by June 1, 2026. Notably, the bill does not require DGS to acquire a property for siting the new facility, but site selection and acquisition would be necessary preconditions for developing and issuing an RFP.

In addition to the expedited timeline for issuing the RFP, SB 187 would adopt a new set of criteria for the eligibility of women to be housed and receive services in the facility. DGS understands the intent of the amended bill to require a larger facility than previously envisioned to accommodate 1.25 percent of the eligible population in 2024. Therefore, if SB 187 becomes law, DGS would be required to add space, scope, and detailed descriptions in Part I and II project plans to fully inform the development of the RFP to be issued by June 1, 2026.

As introduced, SB 187 would have mandated the issuance of the RFP by August 1, 2026, and specified that DGS must identify a new site of at least three acres located at least one mile from any existing correctional facility. DGS must emphasize the challenges of selecting and acquiring a new site satisfying these specifications, including site acquisition costs, intergovernmental coordination with the City of Baltimore, and the extensive community engagement involved in the siting of a new correctional facility.

Given the constraints of available land meeting these standards, the site may be a property owned by the City of Baltimore. The City has its own comprehensive land acquisition and development process, which includes mandatory community engagement. This process alone can take upwards of six months, including approval by the Board of Public Works for acquisition. Once the property is acquired, DPSCS and DGS must complete the programming process, which establishes the design and operational requirements for the facility. This would take a minimum of 90 days before the project can advance to the RFP stage.

In conclusion, whether this project proceeds under current law or the parameters of newly enacted legislation, DGS will continue to be fully engaged and responsive to the General Assembly's efforts to ensure that female incarcerated individuals have access to the necessary gender-responsive reentry services and resources for a successful transition back into the community.

Again, DGS is providing this testimony for informational purposes, and the Department looks forward to being of further assistance as the Committee considers this bill.

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