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Ioana Stoica
5802 Holger Ct, Laurel, MD 20707
ioana.stoica@gmail.com / (240) 643-0059

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB683
Corrections - Women's Prerelease Unit - Requirements
(Women's Prerelease Equity Act)

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Ioana Stoica

My name is Ioana Stoica and I have been a Maryland resident for 22 of the past 30 years. I have resided in District 21 for the past four years. I am writing as a concerned citizen, and as a member of Bend the Arc's Moral Minyan and Oseh Shalom Synagogue in Laurel, MD. This testimony is in support of SB683, a bill that would require Maryland to operate a pre-release center for women near where the majority of them will return to, to help women transition back as productive members of our community.

It is unconscionable that our state has several pre-release facilities for men, and none for women. The Jewish tradition teaches us that we must pursue justice above all, (Deut 16:20), and this includes providing equity of treatment to all people, regardless of sex or gender. According to the Maryland Justice Project, women are twice as likely as men to be incarcerated for a non-violent offense, and almost three quarters of these women are primary caretakers in their families. These women, who have been incarcerated in many cases for outdated laws punishing poverty, such as drug offenses (which overwhelmingly punish women of color and low-income individuals), should be provided opportunities for rehabilitation so they can rejoin their families and be able to provide for their children. Additionally, it is essential that these facilities be located as close as possible to the communities to which the majority of women will be returning in order to facilitate reconnection with their families and communities.

Maryland expects women to be released into the community without any transition period – without a job, cell phone, identification cards/driver's licenses, medical care, public benefits, and without any other supports to ensure a successful transition. How can they transition successfully when we are setting them up for failure? We must fund a women's pre-release center and locate it near where the majority of women live, as this would maximize benefits for the most women.

Rabbi Hillel's teachings of two millennia ago, that we should not separate ourselves from our community, that we should share in our common tribulations, are why I support mandating a women's pre-release center be established in the community where the majority of women will return to. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB683.**