



FACSIMILE NO.

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO.

February 18, 2020

To: The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee

From: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer, Legislative Director, Office of the Attorney General

Re: HB 608 – Correctional Services – Prerelease Unit for Women – Requirement to Operate
(SUPPORT)

The Office of the Attorney General supports House Bill 608, which amends Section 3-301 of the Correctional Services Article to make it mandatory that the Commissioner of Corrections “operate a prerelease unit for women.” Under current law, “[t]he Commissioner of Corrections is statutorily authorized, but not required, to operate a prerelease unit for women.”¹

Promising research supports the utility of prerelease programs in reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for the previously incarcerated.² However, “women are often overlooked with regard to re-entry programming, and results from the recent evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) showed that adult females reported a significantly higher need for services than men.”³

Incarcerated women on the cusp of reentry are just as in need of safe spaces to plan for reentry as are incarcerated men. The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services’ (DPSCS) decision to close a prerelease unit for women in Baltimore City has adversely affected the community of reentrants since fiscal year 2017. Moreover, transferring all prerelease programming to the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup, Maryland has not

¹ See Fiscal and Policy Note for HB 608, at 1 (2020).

² U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, “*The Use and Impact of Correctional Programming for Inmates on Pre- and Post-Release Outcomes*,” (June 2017), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250476.pdf>, (noting modified therapeutic community (MTC) program “participants had significantly lower recidivism rates, but also that the best outcomes were observed for completers of the in-prison MTC program who participated in the community-based aftercare portion of the program following their release from prison.”).

³ Marie Garcia and Nancy Ritter, “*Improving Access to Services for Female Offenders Returning to the Community*,” National Institute of Justice, No. 269, at 18, (Mar. 26, 2012), <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/improving-access-services-female-offenders-returning-community>.



yielded positive outcomes for the women served there. Among other problems, there is no mass-transit to area employers and women who do obtain jobs must be transported, in handcuffs, by DPSCS van to their work. This adversely impacts their colleagues' and supervisors' perception of them. Instead, DPSCS should be required to reopen at least one women-only prerelease center located in the community near mass transit and multiple potential employers.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Office of Attorney General urges a favorable report on HB 608.

cc: Members of the Judiciary Committee