

CALVERT COUNTY DEMOCRATIC  
WOMEN'S CLUB

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Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment Subcommittee  
Budget Hearing-DPSCS Overview  
January 30, 2020, 1:00 pm

Good afternoon. My name is Cindy Yoe and I am the President of the Calvert County Democratic Women's Club ("CCDWC"). Thank you for the opportunity to address this Subcommittee concerning legislation that is of the utmost importance to the CCDWC for the 2020 legislative session. With 158 members (both women and men), the CCDWC is the largest, most politically active Democratic organization in Calvert County.

The CCDWC is asking this Subcommittee to support requiring the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services ("DPSCS") to commit to using the required funding from its budget appropriation to fund the re-opening of a free-standing, pre-release center for women that meets the requirements of the three pre-release bills that will be filed shortly. Further, we ask that you put a "hold" on the DPSCS appropriation until the department commits to fund the women's pre-release center.

The first bill requires the state to open a pre-release unit for women. A stand-alone women's pre-release center is a matter of fairness and equitable treatment of men and women in state custody.

The second bill defines the required pre-release center as free-standing, single gender, and located in or adjacent to the zip code to which the largest percentage of women will be returning. The current situation is nothing short of gender discrimination given the number of men's free-standing pre-release centers (nine) and other programs in facilities throughout the state and with zero pre-release centers for women. Free-standing pre-release centers in the community currently help men reintegrate into society, but not women. Women in pre-release status at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women (MCIW) are currently housed in a maximum-security unit. DCSPS has proposed moving the women across the street to the Brockbridge facility and making a co-ed pre-release center. This is totally unacceptable when dealing with a population of whom 75% have likely been the victim of physical or sexual violence or have been trafficked. Also, this does not solve the problems of no job opportunities in Jessup, no public transit, and no ability to re-unite with family.

The third bill defines the required programming, including the requirement that it be appropriate for women and follow best practices. This is essential as women's experiences are dramatically different from those of men.

We Can Do It!



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Indeed, on this issue, Maryland seems to be moving backward. The state had ONE free-standing pre-release center for women located in Baltimore until it was closed in 2010 due to budgetary issues. At that time, two of the THIRTEEN pre-release centers for men were closed leaving the men with ELEVEN. Why is it that when there is a choice, needs of women always seem to be dispensable?

This is a simple matter of equity and is required to correct this long-standing equal rights violation. Free-standing pre-release centers in the community currently help men reintegrate into society, but not women. Without the job training, counseling and other services provided in a community-based facility, women have difficulty reconnecting to their families and other social supports upon release. Why not offer women the best chance possible to succeed following their release from prison and increase the odds that they will become contributing members of society and not end up back in prison?

A pre-release center that meets the requirements of the proposed legislation is not a matter of money--it is a matter of gender equity. **The pre-release center must be opened regardless of cost and DPSCS must budget for it. Any funds requested for the Brockbridge renovation and move must be re-directed to the opening of a pre-release facility for women.**

**We ask for your resolute support for the three pre-release bills that will be filed shortly by Senator Mary Washington and Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Respectfully submitted,



Cindy L. Yoe  
President