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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB608**

**Correctional Services - Prerelease Unit for Women - Requirement to Operate**

**TO:** Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbearry, and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Anita Lampel

My name is Anita Lampel. I live in District 16 and I am submitting testimony in favor of House Bill 608.

I have a PhD in psychology and worked for over 20 years as an independent assessor in the juvenile and adult court system. Claudia was one of many parents whose ability to care for her child concerned the Court. As a forensic psychologist, I was responsible for assessing whether Claudia should have custody of her four-year old daughter when Claudia was released from prison. But the little girl's bond with her mother had been damaged because Claudia was at a site too far away for visits. When Claudia left prison, she tried to establish herself with a job. Then she chose the wrong relationship — a man with a bad temper, just like her father had. So Claudia failed to gain the single most important goal...her daughter.

This tragedy could have been avoided if Claudia had been in a pre-release facility close to her daughter so contact was maintained. It could have been avoided if Claudia had received the critical counseling and guidance she needed to avoid bad choices in relationships.

Help women like Claudia by placing them in a pre-release facility near their families. For the majority of incarcerated women, this is near Baltimore. Help them by ensuring counseling to understand the trauma they suffered and how to avoid duplicating that trauma again in their lives. Do not expose them to conflict situations by putting them around either high risk incarcerated women or around incarcerated men. Please don't set them up to leave prison but fail in establishing their lives.

Thank you for your attention. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB608.**