



# MARIAN HOUSE

Women Moving from Dependence to Independence

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB608**

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

TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Katie Allston, Executive Director

DATE: February 18, 2020

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need housing and support services. Marian House provides comprehensive wraparound services to assist women that are re-entering the community after incarceration. Marian House strongly supports House Bill 608 Correctional Services- Prerelease Unit.

Life after incarceration is challenging, especially for female inmates in Maryland. The majority of incarcerated women are single mothers who will return home to care for their children. Family and social support is essential for this transition to be successful, and female inmates on pre-release status should have the opportunity to begin rebuilding these crucial networks before they are released. Without access to comprehensive services that address housing and employment, many women are released with no long term home plan and no means of stable income. By establishing a Women's Prerelease Unit, the state will not only reduce barriers to success for these women, but also improve the lives of their children and families.

Marian House provided community-based care as a continuation of reentry supports for individuals exiting the Women's Prerelease Center prior to its closure in 2009. Since the closure of the center, women entering our program upon release are more likely to be without a GED, lack vocational skills, and have limited family ties. Although Marian House offers wraparound services that mitigate these challenges, the women we serve would benefit from beginning these efforts before release. Rather than building upon existing progress that could have been made in a pre-release setting, female inmates are now forced to begin their reentry process on the day of release. If women had the opportunity to begin working toward reentry before coming to Marian House, they could complete our program more quickly, potentially allowing us to serve more people in need.

Maryland offers a number of prerelease programs for men, and female inmates are currently denied these opportunities. Women are similarly, if not more deserving of access to prerelease supports, specifically related to the transition back to custodial parenthood, as this challenge is less common among men. Women's prerelease supports that are substantially equivalent to those available to men should be required and implemented within the correctional system. Marian House implores the state to support HB608 so that all of its returning citizens have the best opportunity for a successful release and life in the community.



# MARIAN HOUSE

Women Moving from Dependence to Independence

On behalf of the women we serve at Marian House and their families, I respectfully urge you to take the call to action in **SUPPORT of HB608**.

Thank you for your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Allston', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Katie Allston, LCSW-C  
Executive Director