



**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

February 25, 2020

**Testimony in Support  
Of**

**House Bill 828-Women's Prerelease Unit-Requirements (Women's Prerelease Equity Act)**

This legislation would provide the critical definitions for eligibility, structure, location and community access for incarcerated women assigned to the prerelease security level in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women.

The Commissioner of the Division of Correction has no clear guidelines for the structure, location or eligibility for a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease facility. A prerelease unit for women should be defined as a separate structure; located in a geographical location where the largest population of returning citizens will be released; and community access for participants.

Participant eligibility for the prerelease unit should be offered to incarcerated women who are: (1) the least risk of violence; (2) least risk of escape; and (3) have obtained a record of satisfactory institutional behavior.

Currently, prerelease security level women are living the in the general population with other incarcerated women, who are classified from minimum to maximum security levels. This creates discord that can lead to further stress and trauma to women, who are within a few months to several years from release. These women deserve to live in surroundings that match their security level and are separate and distinct from other security levels.

Additionally, this separate structure should be located in a geographical location where the highest percentage of likely returning citizens will be released. Data indicates that community based facilities have lowered recidivism rates; therefore the prerelease unit should be located adjacent to or in close proximity to the zip codes where the majority of returning citizens will be released.

To further their transition and acclimation into the community, women should be given opportunities to access community services and other opportunities that will provide them with a smooth transition back into the community.

Simply put, this legislation will provide guidelines and definition to the Commissioner of the Division of Correction on the structure, location, community access and participant eligibility for a comprehensive rehabilitative prerelease facility for incarcerated women in Maryland.

**I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 828.**

**Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield**