

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL #HB1476

Independent Oversight and Review Board for Health Care of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities-Establishment

Date: February 26, 2020

From: Students at the Johns Hopkins University Schools of Medicine and Public Health

To: Chairman Luke Clippinger, Madame Chair Vanessa Atterbeary and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Re: SUPPORT FOR BILL#HB1476

We are medical and public health students at Johns Hopkins University who are concerned about the health of people who are incarcerated. We are writing in support of the bill HB1476. This bill would establish an independent oversight and review board for the healthcare of people incarcerated in Maryland state correctional facilities. Importantly, this board would include healthcare providers and experts in law and public health.

Incarceration has well-documented long-term health consequences on people regardless of the duration of their incarceration.¹ In addition, studies have shown that people who are incarcerated suffer from higher rates of chronic medical conditions when compared to the general population.² As such, the provision of high-quality health care, with attention to the particular needs of people who are incarcerated, is essential. In order to provide this care, it is necessary for people of a variety of backgrounds to be involved in the administration of care, including representatives of the population of people who have been incarcerated. However, these needs are not being met by the current provider of healthcare in Maryland, the medical contractor Corizon.³ As of February 2019, Corizon has been a defendant in over 1000 lawsuits across the country over alleged neglect, malpractice, wrongful injury, and death.⁴ In order to prevent further neglect and mistreatment of the vulnerable patients who are incarcerated, increased scrutiny, transparency, and oversight, such as what would be provided by this bill, are of the utmost importance.

As students going into medicine and public health, we strongly believe all individuals deserve access to high quality healthcare. It is our ethical responsibility to advocate for policies that promote justice and equity. The current lack of oversight in the health care of the incarcerated people of Maryland makes it impossible for these basic ethical principles to be met. We urge you to issue a favorable recommendation for HB1476.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ Massoglia M. Incarceration, Health, and Racial Disparities in Health. *Law and Society Review*. 2008;42(2):275-306. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1540-5893.2008.00342.x>. Accessed February 26, 2019.

²Binswanger IA, Krueger PM, Steiner JF. Prevalence of chronic medical conditions among jail and prison inmates in the United States compared with the general population. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 2009;63(11):912–19. Accessed February 26, 2019.

³Corizon Health to Partner With the State of Maryland. (2018, December 20). Retrieved February 26, 2020, from <http://www.corizonhealth.com/index.php/S=0/Corizon-News/corizon-health-to-partner-with-the-state-of-maryland>

⁴Coll, S. (2019, March 4). The Jail Health-Care Crisis. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/04/the-jail-health-care-crisis>