

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL #HB1476

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

Date: 28 February, 2020

From: Vicki Learn

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

Re: SUPPORT FOR BILL#HB1476

I have been a Howard County Public School teacher for over ten years. During that time, I have had the unfortunate circumstance of having a few current and former students enter the system. I understand that they may deserve their incarceration, but they are still human beings.

One of my former students, Chaz Bazzle (358430/3077345) is an inmate at RCI. I met Mr Bazzle as a 7th grader and maintained contact with him until he graduated. I left the country to teach abroad, and when I returned, I received a letter from Chaz, letting me know where he was. We have re-established our relationship and I continue to work with Chaz to support his efforts to better himself as well as improve the situation of his peers. I am consistently frustrated with our prison system as it provides minimal supports for inmates to grow and improve themselves to become better members of society.

Bill bill #HB1476 pertains to health services, and I became aware of the lack of BASIC medical support when Chaz broke his ankle in December. He was denied urgent medical care, not given pain medications or proper bandaging, stuck back in his cell with crutches when he was told to elevate and stay off his leg, not allowed showers, and treated with disregard by correctional officers. He was denied follow up care, moved without notification, and treated inhumanely off and on for two months. He is currently not allowed to use the phone, so I have no way of knowing how he is healing.

Chaz has an additional issue. He has never consistently been provided with mental health services, which he needs (and everyone can benefit from) to prevent recidivism. Because he lives within a population of offenders, it is even more difficult to make the right choices. Without appropriate and ongoing mental health services (WHICH WERE PART OF HIS SENTENCING GUIDELINES), he will continue to suffer.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Learn