



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 742 – Maryland Model Prisons For Youthful Offenders Study Act Sponsor: Senator Smith

February 23, 2021

DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Support

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supports Senate Bill 742 which would establish the Maryland Model Prisons Study Workgroup to develop a plan for fundamental changes to the culture and practices of State prisons. The plan would focus on the reduction of recidivism for all incarcerated individuals and prioritize the classification of incarcerated individuals who committed offenses when under the age of 25 years. The workgroup would be required to report its finding to the Governor no later than December 1, 2022.

The cost of incarceration and recidivism is staggering. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, the U.S. prison population has increased by 700 percent in the last 40 years, with 700 out of every 100,000 people incarcerated. State corrections expenditures alone surpassed \$53 billion in 2012. Additionally, 40 percent of individuals will return to prison within 3 years of release while some estimates that as many as 70 percent of individuals will be re-arrested within 5 years of release. Maryland's incarceration rate is 585 out of every 100,000 people, lower than the U.S. average but more than triple the rate of most Western democracies. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice, Maryland's recidivism rate is 40 percent.

Senate Bill 724 is an important step toward reforming Maryland's criminal justice challenges. The workgroup will use a data driven approach to develop a plan for fundamental changes to the culture and practices of State prisons. Instead of concentrating on punishment and confinement, the plan will focus on rehabilitation, restorative justice, and reduction of recidivism. The prison system will continue to play its traditional role as a vehicle of justice while simultaneously empowering incarcerated individuals with the tools, skills, and incentives to be positive members of society.

One of the key tenets of the GBC's 2021 Legislative Priorities is the **improvement of public safety through enhanced coordination among criminal justice agencies, implementation of comprehensive violence reduction strategies, and coordinated re-entry services**. This calls for evidence based policies and programs to promote successful re-entry from incarceration and remove barriers to employment, including restrictions on access to education and training grants and scholarships, professional and occupational licenses, and housing.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 742.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 66-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

111 South Calvert Street • Suite 1700 • Baltimore, Maryland • 21202-6180

(410) 727-2820 • www.gbc.org