

Support HB1188/SB0809 — Office of the Attorney General — Correctional Ombudsman

**Testimony of Jim Rose
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I am writing to ask your support for HB1188/SB0809 — Correctional Ombudsman.

As you know, prisons are dangerous and unhealthy places. Although the office would not have the authority directly to fix the problems it identifies, the ombudsman could offer mediation and broker prompt, informal solutions. More important, it would bring transparency to Maryland prisons, highlight systemic and recurring problems, and recommend changes. Finally, as other states that have introduced an Ombudsman Office have shown, the creation of this office could result in substantial savings now spent on prisoner grievance litigation, healthcare, and other costs.

This bill would establish, an independent ombudsman in the office of the Attorney General to publicly report on problems and recommend improvements regarding the needs and rights of prisoners, their families, and prison volunteers. The Office of the Ombudsman would be responsible for investigating complaints concerning incarcerated persons' health, safety, welfare, and rights; providing information to them and their families; identifying and publicizing systemic issues; and monitoring compliance of the Department of Corrections with relevant statutes, rules, and policies. Its employees would have the authority to enter any facility at any time and talk to anyone they deem necessary. Correspondence and communication with the Office would be confidential and privileged.

For more information see the issue brief: <https://www.ma4jr.org/ombuds/>