



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 512: Office of the Attorney General - Correctional Ombudsman

TO: Chair William C. Smith and the members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Karen “Candy” Clark, Lead Advocate, Criminal Justice Reform
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
DATE: February 17, 2022

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland, strongly urges your support for SB 512: Office of the Attorney General - Correctional Ombudsman bill.

Recently Maryland’s police accountability reforms recognized that outside oversight contributes to building trust and justice for the victims of officers’ inappropriate use of power. So, too, will SB 512. A Correctional Ombudsman program benefits the prison environment, brings justice for the victims and holds those with power accountable to our Correctional system.

Several years ago when Gov. Hogan appointed Ron Green as Secretary of Corrections, within a short time he was faced with a long on-going scandal involving about a dozen employees and others. This was one of 5 major scandals that had occurred over the past 11 years.

MARYLAND CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS!!

By establishing an impartial independent oversight in a public office, the information coming out of the individual prisons will be more reliable. Having unannounced visits– including the right to talk with anyone– will add strength to its role. Our correctional institutions should be a just environment in which offenders are in the process of rehabilitation

Currently our Juvenile System uses this process for oversight of its various smaller housing facilities for the youth. A detailed quarterly report is published which includes data, interviews with the youth and the condition of the facilities, etc. This helps to keep the system working as it is intended and reveals issues that need to be addressed.

Maryland citizens need a system that we can be proud of, that honors the inherent dignity and worth of our offenders while we help them to prepare for a successful reentry .

Please give SB 512 a FAVORABLE vote,

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Clark

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