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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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**Oral Testimony of Jazz Lewis
HB661 - Workgroup to Study Reentry
Before the Judiciary Committee**

To Chair Clippinger and Vice-Chair Moon and members of the Judiciary Committee.

I am proud to introduce House Bill 661, which will create a workgroup to study the effectiveness of reentry programs in the state of Maryland. The reentry study workgroup is a necessary step in the right direction to ensure that Maryland's returning citizens are properly equipped and prepared to reenter society as full and contributing members of their community.

The workgroup's work on reentry programs will be useful for the future as it can help guide the state on which measures are working and which are falling short. The workgroup will primarily focus on the effectiveness of the services offered by reentry programs in the state and any shortcomings that currently exist in the system.

The workgroup may show that employment-related services are the most helpful to citizens who are reentering society after incarceration. The workgroup would also be able to show how our state might do better and if there are models from other states that have proven to be successful. Which we could replicate.

Reentry programs can also help tackle the issue of recidivism in the state. However, if these programs are not tailored properly, they may prove to be ineffective at helping individuals and reducing recidivism, which is why this workgroup is important. We need to take a long hard look at the effectiveness of these programs throughout Maryland. With the use of the findings from the workgroup, the state can better reform or improve the reentry programs to be successful. As well as suggesting ways to ensure that Marylanders are aware of these programs designed to help them reenter society following release.

Reentry programs are a crucial step to addressing the needs of returning citizens as there are numerous challenges that they face following their reentry into society. Reentry programs help these Marylanders get back on their feet becoming members of the workforce or finding a place to live. With the stigma associated with incarceration and the obstacles presented after incarceration, reentry programs can be a key piece in a person's journey to reentry. By having the workgroup study and examine the reentry programs in our state, we can ensure that these programs are working effectively for those that need them and better understand the steps we need to take to do better.

For these reasons I urge a favorable report.