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Maryland Advocacy Groups Urge Legislature to Reject \$1 Billion Jail, Prioritize Women's Prerelease Center

Annapolis, MD, March 18, 2025 – A coalition of more than 30 civil rights, racial justice, criminal legal system reform, and faith-based organizations, including the [University of Baltimore School of Law Center for Criminal Justice Reform](#), [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#), [Justice Policy Institute](#), [Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law](#), and [Jews United for Justice](#), sent a letter to Maryland legislators and Governor Wes Moore urging them to reject funding for the proposed \$1 billion jail, or so-called Baltimore Therapeutic Treatment Center (BTTC). Instead, the legislature should prioritize the construction of the long-overdue women's prerelease center in Baltimore, a transitional environment that would provide support and resources to aid women who are incarcerated in successfully reintegrating into their communities.

The organizations assert that the proposed BTTC is an unnecessary and costly expansion of the state's carceral system, which disproportionately [incarcerates Black people](#) pretrial, particularly as Maryland faces a \$3 billion budget deficit. The letter states:

“Maryland policymakers should not support the construction of a nearly \$1 billion jail in Baltimore for several reasons. BTTC is the most expensive capital project in the state’s history, and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) has demonstrated its inability to provide needed health-care services to its current jail and prison populations.”

Citing a 2024 audit, the letter also raises concerns over DPSCS’s track record of mismanagement and failure to provide adequate healthcare services:

“DPSCS structured and awarded contracts to providers who failed to deliver adequate healthcare services despite concerns with contractors’ inability to recruit and retain staff; failed to monitor contractors to ensure that they completed intake screenings, performed physical exams properly, and completed missing screenings and exams; and could not justify \$7.6 million worth of payments to pharmaceutical contractors or a \$20 million settlement with a medical contractor.”

Additionally, the letter notes that DPSCS is a party in a settlement agreement in the decades-old case of Duvall v. Moore. DPSCS agreed to improve its delivery of healthcare services, among other things, to people who are incarcerated pretrial in Baltimore. The agreement has been extended four times since 2020 because DPSCS has failed to meet the requirements in the agreement. The coalition letter explains:

“the Duvall litigation continues to bring forth urgent issues related to the challenges and failings of the state to comply with adequate medical and mental healthcare for people who are incarcerated. However, as court filings and census updates make clear, these are not problems related to bed space.”

The groups emphasize that Maryland’s declining pretrial population further undermines the justification for the BTTC. From 2013 to 2024, the number of arrestees in Maryland decreased by 66%, and the pretrial detention population dropped by 27% statewide. In Baltimore, the pretrial population decreased by 3% between 2022 and 2023. Given these trends, the letter questions the need for an 854-bed jail and calls for a more transparent and community-informed decision-making process.

The coalition also highlights that in 2020, Maryland lawmakers passed the Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act, requiring DPSCS to build what would become the state’s only women’s prerelease facility by 2023. However, DPSCS has yet to begin construction and has not requested funding for the project for 2026.

Signing organizations conclude by urging:

“For the humanity and dignity of those living and working behind walls, we urge lawmakers to reject funding for the BTTC, prioritize the construction of the women’s prerelease center as mandated by law, and engage in a far more collaborative and transparent process for addressing needed improvements to the delivery of healthcare and other services to people who are incarcerated.”

The full letter and list of signatories is available [here](#).

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