

CITY OF BALTIMORE

Stefanie Mavronis
Director



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD
SAFETY AND ENGAGEMENT

2700 Rayner Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21216
monse.baltimorecity.gov

February 27, 2024

The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 409
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: City Council Bill 23-0416 – Baltimore City Office of Returning Citizens

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council,

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) has reviewed Council Bill 23-0416, which creates the Baltimore City Office of Returning Citizens and establishes Baltimore's first Re-Entry Action Council (RAC) to be overseen by the Office. The bill would institutionalize MONSE's current re-entry work and help to expand and sustain the City's capacity to serve individuals returning from incarceration.

The Office of Returning Citizens would be housed within MONSE and focus on coordinating services, developing support networks, and advocating for Baltimoreans re-entering society. Re-entry work focuses on supporting returning citizens and preventing re-offense. Ensuring that returning citizens have the services and supports needed to successfully re-enter society is a crucial component of efforts to reduce recidivism and improve public safety, breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, crime, and mass incarceration. The success of returning citizens is a benefit for all Baltimoreans, and it is vital that the work starts prior to release.

MONSE has begun laying the foundation for this work with the implementation of re-entry programs including the Returning Citizens Behind The Wall (RCBTW) initiative, an ARPA-funded partnership between MONSE and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) which provides training and paid employment for people preparing to return to their communities, along with wraparound support and services prior to and upon their return. RCBTW connects individuals who are incarcerated and eligible for work release with \$15/hour

CITY OF BALTIMORE

Stefanie Mavronis
Director



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD
SAFETY AND ENGAGEMENT

2700 Rayner Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21216
monse.baltimorecity.gov

employment with Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP). The program also provides participants with career training and counseling in financial management and conflict resolution, among other services. RCBTW currently has 24 active participants, and a total of 103 individuals have participated in RCBTW since the program's soft launch in Spring 2023.

Baltimore's first Re-Entry Action Council (RAC) is overseen by MONSE and is tasked with coordinating with government agencies and community-based organizations around Baltimore's Re-Entry Continuum of Care. The Council has 25 members and meets bi-monthly; the first meet was held in January 2024. The RAC focuses on collaborating with partners including the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) to implement evidence-based practices to assist returning citizens and reduce recidivism among formerly incarcerated Baltimoreans. To that end, the Council meets monthly and aims to ensure seamless coordination of services to address and reduce barriers for returning citizens.

The total projected budget for the Office is \$5 million, which includes funding for eight full-time staff positions (Community Engagement and Opportunity Associate Director, Re-Entry Deputy Director, Navigator, Career Navigator, two Housing Locators, and two Case Administrators); and transitional job employment, job training, rent stipends, and safe return planning for up to 250 returning citizens per year. MONSE is exploring all funding opportunities including foundation grants as well as state and federal dollars for long term sustainability.

This legislation will help to enhance and codify current re-entry efforts under a dedicated office within MONSE, building on the progress to date and reaffirming the City's commitment to supporting Baltimore's returning citizens. For this reason, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on City Council Bill 23-0416.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stefanie Mavronis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "S".

Stefanie Mavronis
Director