

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 186:
Correctional Facilities - Released Inmates – Identification Cards**

TO: Hon. Joseph Vallario, Chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Melissa Broome, Senior Policy Advocate
DATE: March 31, 2009

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes improved economic opportunities for low-income workers, in particular job-seekers who are returning to society from prison. We support SB 186 as a means of encouraging gainful employment among former inmates upon their release from incarceration.

In Maryland, approximately 15,000 prisoners are released from incarceration each year. Many have little or no mainstream work experience, and most read at or below a third grade reading level when they entered prison.

Birth certificates and social security cards are often lost during the process of traveling through the criminal justice system, leaving individuals with no form of identification upon release. While possession of a criminal record in and of itself poses a tremendous barrier to mainstream employment, the lack of documentation establishing an offender's identity makes the ability to secure employment even more arduous.

Without proper identification, people with criminal records are often unable to find employment, secure housing, or apply for public benefits that can provide critical assistance such as food, shelter or medication. If they are fortunate enough to find work, the lack of state ID can make it extremely difficult to cash paychecks or open a bank account.

While the identification card administered under SB 186 is not enough in and of itself to obtain a primary ID (such as a Maryland state identification card or driver's license), it does fulfill the obligation for proof of secondary identification, which is required by the Motor Vehicle Administration before an individual can obtain a Maryland state ID card or driver's license.

We support SB 186 because individuals with formal identification documents are more likely to succeed during the process of transition to the community. No one is served when individuals cannot engage in the workforce and remain self-sufficient. For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report.