



**Summary of Comments at the Second Stakeholders Meeting  
Sponsored by the Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council  
October 8, 2015 Cambridge, Maryland**

Christopher Shank, Executive Director of the Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council (JRCC), convened the second of three stakeholder meetings intended to inform Council's recommendations. About 40 people attended, not counting staff and Council members. Following a presentation by Pew Foundation staff that highlighted key findings from their review of Maryland data on the state's justice system, stakeholders who had signed up to make statements to the Council did so in a series of frank and informative panels. Council members engaged with speakers, asking questions and frequently inviting speakers to provide additional information to assist JRCC committees, which are now meeting to develop recommendations.

We learned that Pew Foundation staff are working on a summary of the first and second stakeholders meetings. Watch the [JRCC site](#) for their review.

The messages delivered at this meeting often reinforced those of the first stakeholder meeting, held in September. MAJR's [summary of that meeting](#) is on our website. Here is some of what we heard in October.

*Note: Because the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) does not have access to a participant list, we apologize in advance for inevitable errors in the spelling of participants' names in the summary that follows.*

**Counties' Ability to Fund Re-Entry Initiatives Vary Greatly**

Janet Lane, Re-entry Coordinator for Wicomico County, told Council members that the wealth of Maryland's counties, not the needs of returning citizens, drives program capacity. Caroline County has no full-time homeless shelter, for example. Many of the Detention Centers on the Eastern Shore have few or no classrooms. Ms. Lane is the only re-entry coordinator for the entirely Eastern Shore. Reducing recidivism requires attention to preparation for successful employment, access to health insurance, housing, and assisting people who are incarcerated in forming specific goals for their lives after release.

**Faith-Based Groups Can Help Returning Citizens**

Jim Hively of Chiros Ministries said that his group has an excellent record of helping returning citizens be successful. The organization offers mentoring and helps people formulate goals and manage financing, as well as anchoring them with a faith community. Only 1 in 48 people supported by the ministry in his geographic area has returned to prison. Mr. Hively looks forward to a dialogue with Secretary Moyer on how the Department of Corrections can benefit from the work of faith-based volunteers and avoid placing obstacles in their path.

**Returning Citizens Face Formidable Obstacles to Employment**

Phillis Hardy of the Goodwill Development Program reported that many returning citizens are not job ready, and DOC's expectation that they will get jobs in 30 days is unreasonable. Attention must be given to family reunification and helping individuals see their self-worth, handle the inevitable rejections, and find jobs for which they are eligible.

## **The War on Drugs is a Failure – But Treatment Works**

As at the September meeting, several speakers forcefully emphasized the importance of drug courts and adequate treatment for people with addictions. John Winslow asked Council members to recommend sustainable funding for drug courts and treatment for those who are incarcerated, as well as post-release treatment. Several speakers said Maryland is facing a heroine epidemic and has not devoted the resources that are critically needed to combat it. One speaker observed that some residential treatment programs are as short as 14 days, and this amount of time is inadequate to help people overcome an established addiction. Cary Winkle noted that Cecil County's three methadone clinics are overbooked and there is a wait list for drug courts. Samantha Parker said that judges in Caroline County have few referral options for those who need treatment.

## **With Adequate Funding, More People Could Leave Prison with a College Education**

Amy Rosa reported that Gaucher College offers classes funded by Rand Corporation and donations that can lead to a college degree for people who are incarcerated. So far, the initiative has only private funding, and she has 500 letters from people who are interested in the program that cannot yet be admitted because of lack of funding.

## **High Case Loads for Probation Officers Put Public Safety at Risk “Every Day”**

Heather Hall, speaking for a union of probation officers, stressed that case numbers of 30 to 40 returning citizens are much too high to allow effective supervision and place public welfare at risk. Probation officers are required to travel to hearings in addition to supervision. Many supervisees have unnecessary special conditions that require time to monitor. She asked that agents be given the authority to order sanctions and reward compliance, a request that is in keeping with evidence-based practices as presented by Pew Foundation staff.

## **Mediation Can Help Mend Frayed Relationships**

Cynthia Jurrius and Phil Ernest of the Community Mediation Center stressed that “relationships matter.” Mediation can help people get at the root of conflicts in schools or communities, reinforce stable families, and make re-entry more successful. Speakers noted that some counties are more enthusiastic than others about the potential of mediation, and as a result, services vary widely. Michelle Ennis of Tri-Community Mediation services said trained volunteers can serve as mediators, helping to ensure a racial match that may make mediations more successful. Some returning citizens want to serve as volunteer mediators as a way of giving back to their communities but are barred from doing so by an executive order.

## **People Sentenced to Life with the Possibility of Parole Should Be Considered for Parole**

Lea Green, the mother of a “lifer,” pointed out that people who are sentenced to life in prison but with the possibility of parole have a low rate of recidivism. Many are now aging in Maryland's prison at an unnecessarily high cost to taxpayers. She asked that the state place trust in its parole board and allow their recommendations to go forward.

## **People in Sex Offender Registries Need the Opportunity to Rejoin Communities**

Don Jurig of Fair, Inc. said that sex offenders include many whose offenses were nonviolent. He argued that the state's policies were not evidence-based and that by restricting access to housing, jobs, and social networks, these policies increase the likelihood of recidivism in a group that actually has a low rate of reoffense.

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