



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, January 13, 2021

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Delaware Community Organizations and Advocates Announce Support for Public Health Emergency Credit Bill

WILMINGTON — ACLU of Delaware, Building People Power, Campaign for Smart Justice, Campaign to End Debtor’s Prison, Coalition to Dismantle The New Jim Crow, Delaware Center for Justice, Delaware NAACP, Delaware United, and Network Delaware have launched a campaign today in support of House Bill 37, the Public Health Emergency Credit bill up for consideration in the General Assembly.

The proposed legislation, co-sponsored by Senator Marie Pinkney and Representative Melissa Minor-Brown, would create a public health emergency credit, expanding avenues for early release from prison during times of crisis, when traditional avenues for earned credits may not be available to incarcerated people. For every month served during a public health emergency a person would receive 6 months’ credit, up to a maximum reduction in sentence of 1 year. This will reduce the prison population in an orderly and fair manner, relieving pressure on staff and creating better conditions for people who remain incarcerated to socially distance and mitigate the spread of infectious diseases.

“HB 37 is legislation that’s rooted in public health and safety,” said Mike Brickner, executive director of the ACLU of Delaware. “Safely reducing the number of people in prison is a critical component to containing the spread of COVID-19 inside prison walls. As the pandemic continues to ravage our communities, election officials must act now to prevent future outbreaks and more loss of life in prison.”

The advocacy campaign in support of HB 37 kicked off with a letter to the 151st General Assembly today, and aims to garner public and legislative support for swift passage and signing of the proposed legislation. Other neighboring states, such as Maryland and New Jersey have enacted similar policies that protect public health and safety. The ACLU of Delaware urges members of the public to follow their social media pages for updates on the status of the bill, action items, and other campaign news.

The full letter can be found online here:

https://www.aclu-de.org/sites/default/files/organizations_letter_of_support_hb_37.docx.pdf

This press release can be found online here:

https://www.aclu-de.org/sites/default/files/press_release_hb_37_support_campaign.pdf

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