



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Maryland Correctional Enterprises

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BILLS: House Bill 1566 – Maryland Correctional Enterprises –
Workgroup on Vocational Training and Placement

DATE: March 10, 2020

The passage of House Bill 1566 would duplicate several ongoing efforts to enhance post-release employment opportunities for returning citizens. In addition, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and Maryland Correctional Enterprises do not have sufficient resources to support a reliable study focusing on post-release employment data.

Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) is the self-supporting prison industry arm of the Division of Correction within the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). The mission of MCE focuses on providing structured employment and training activities to enhance offender rehabilitation. In conjunction with our mission, MCE is responsible for maintaining compliance with the following mandates:

- Is financially self-supporting, generates revenue for its operations and capital investments
- Seeks to develop industries that provide full-timework experience or rehabilitation programs for all eligible inmates, and
- Operates correctional industries in an environment that resembles as closely as possible the environment of private sector business operations

In FY 19 MCE generated in excess of \$52 million in revenues and employed over 1,500 inmates at fiscal year-end. The current MCE organization consists of 26 business units located at 10 state correctional facilities. MCE business units are located in Cumberland, Hagerstown, Sykesville, Jessup, and Westover. MCE utilizes maximum, medium, minimum, pre-release and work release inmates. When developing business units and work opportunities, MCE must select ventures that will support our self-supporting mission and adhere to security restrictions within a prison system. MCE operates at a minimal profit in order to ensure continuity of our program.

As you are aware, MCE is dedicated to enhancing the lives of those that work for us by providing meaningful employment and training activities. To enhance these efforts, MCE is already involved in several initiatives to enhance post release employment efforts.

MCE's Management Council acts as our Board of Directors as mandated in the Correctional Services Article. Several members recommended to participate in the HB1566 workgroup already serve as members of the Management Council and perform similar duties, making several aspects of the bill duplicative of current practices. The membership and a sampling of duties are outlined below:

Management Council

- Membership
 - Commissioner of Correction
 - Representative of the Comptroller of the Treasury
 - Chief Executive Officer

- Member of the House of Delegates
- Member of the Senate
- Representative of the University System of Maryland
- Representative of the State Department of Education
- Representative of the Department of Labor
- Representative of the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention,
- Representatives of organized labor
- Judge, appointed by the Chief Judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals;
- Representatives of the business community
- Representative of a nonprofit organization
- Duties
 - Advise Maryland Correctional Enterprises on its specific proposals to establish new industries and improve the quality and quantity of job training programs
 - Review success in meeting employability development needs of inmates
 - Coordinate work programs with other rehabilitative programs
 - Solicit ideas on enhancing the work experience and increasing the ability to gain employment
 - Submit an annual report summarizing the Management Council's activities and recommendations

MCE also has invested in several reentry initiatives as outlined below. MCE funds these reentry services.

- MCE Continuing Allocation of Reentry Services (CARES)
 - CARES is a six month, in-depth reentry program offered to offenders within three years of release. This course offers coursework that includes:
 - Employment Readiness
 - Thinking for a Change
 - Financial Literacy
 - Parenting
 - MCE hired a new fulltime Director for this program in January; this position was recently converted from part-time to fulltime. In addition to coordinating the class, the Director is responsible for making business contacts across Maryland to encourage community partners to hire former MCE workers. This position is supported by four contractual instructor positions.
 - Our next class will start this month with 18 participants. Over 300 participants have graduated from this program.
- Joint Skills Training Partnership Program
 - If an inmate is released or transferred from a business unit, they have the ability to earn a certificate from the Department of Labor after one year of satisfactory service. This certificate also includes a job competency list for the specific title held while in our program
 - MCE also issues forklift certification cards through this program

- Practice What We Preach Initiative
 - MCE offers a Work Release Program at our headquarters office with MCIW and DRCF. Inmates are offered work release positions that include duties within our warehouse, design, fiscal, and customer service units.
 - Nine civilian staffers currently working at MCE headquarters previously worked for us behind the fence. They are now fulltime, state employees.
- MD Chamber Second Chance Task Force
 - MCE became a member last year – the MCE CARES/ Reentry Director will participate in future meetings and connect with employers
- Additional Training Programs
 - Meat cutting apprenticeship program
 - Two year program offered to offenders within five years of release
 - Program completed in conjunction with Hagerstown Community College and Department of Labor
 - Six month graphics training program (through Department of Labor)
 - Inmates are paid by MCE to attend classes and receive priority hiring with MCE after completion
- DPSCS Assistant Secretary of Reentry
 - DPSCS recently appointed an Assistant Secretary. Her duties encompass increasing partnerships with companies that will offer post-release employment opportunities to returning citizens. MCE supports the Assistant Secretary in her duties including a Second Chance Employer Symposium held shortly after her appointment

Since MCE operates under the umbrella of DPSCS, MCE does not have the data collection capabilities that would be required by the current bill. MCE relies on data and information provided by the DPSCS Office of Data Development. Statistical analysts, Case Managers, and Parole and Probation Agents work in conjunction to maintain the Offender Case Management System (OCMS) Database. DPSCS currently tracks offender data, but does not have the ability to track post-release employment data within their current software system, and costly system upgrades would be required to establish a process to begin tracking any applicable data. In addition, any data collected would be incomplete, as only offenders under DPP supervision could be monitored. Much of the data would be based on self-supporting statistics, which may be unreliable and insufficient for study purposes. DPSCS is currently working towards providing general recidivism data and may be able to measure recidivism success rates that would specifically address returning citizens that have worked in an MCE Business Unit and participated in our CARES program.

Based on data received by the National Correctional Industries Association (NCIA), studies across the nation continue to show that involvement in a correctional industry program has a positive effect on reducing states' recidivism rates. All MCE products and services maintain a "value added" component through manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, various services, clerical / computer skills, etc.

We respectfully request that you reconsider submission of HB1566 as DPSCS and MCE are already making innovative strides to enhance reentry and focus on rehabilitation. If you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to contact Catherine Kahl or Rachel Sessa at 410-260-6074.