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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 1058 – Justice and Public Health Prioritization Council
Judiciary
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Support

AFSCME Council 3 supports HB 1058. This legislation would establish the Justice and Public Health Prioritization Council to develop a statewide framework of sentencing and correction policies to further reduce the State's incarcerated population, reduce spending on corrections, and reinvest in infrastructure, services, and strategies to prioritize public health, increase public safety, and reduce recidivism.

The Justice Reinvestment Act of 2016 was a positive, if incomplete, step toward rethinking and redirecting resources towards the goals of rehabilitation and community reintegration versus penalty and punishment. Delegate Moon's vision for a Justice and Public Health Prioritization Council acknowledges the tight intertwining of criminal justice and mental health. The fact of the matter is that all too often substance use and mental health disorders create a toxic combination that can lead to illegal activity. The question to be answered is: How do we effectively engage those individuals who find themselves in trouble with the law when substance use or mental health disorder has created the personal crisis? There are a number of programs and policies being put forward which would seem to be addressing this conundrum. However, so many of the policies that are being proposed do not ensure the appropriate resources necessary to achieve successful outcomes. Creating diversion programs for example, will only be as effective as the broad spectrum of engagement, consideration, and evaluation that needs to take place on multiple levels to ensure that individuals are getting the supports and services they need while also ensuring justice is served. The bottom line is that there needs to be a major transformative rethinking of how we best approach these issues for the benefit of all. Delegate Moon's legislation is an important step forward to bring relevant stakeholders together to share best practices, new ideas, and express existing concerns so that Maryland can once again serve as a beacon of both opportunity and redemption for all.

AFSCME urges a favorable report of HB 1058, and we look forward to working together.

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