



P.O. Box 386, Thurmont, MD 21788
www.marylandprisonersrights.org

February 7, 2023

Favorable: SB0087/HB0064

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Maryland Prisoners' Rights Coalition is an organization working to improve the conditions of confinement for the incarcerated in Maryland. Over many years, we have identified many risks to prisoners' health and safety. Consistently, the worst of them is the availability and quality of health care services provided in Maryland prisons. We have fought to change these practices.

Our Process: Many inmates, families, and advocates contact us with issues concerning conditions of confinement. As part of our client intake process, we ask them to complete a request for information form, which is submitted to DSPCS for our clients' medical records. Over the course of the years, we have found that DSPCS lacked proper medical records and unclear policies, and our interrogatories received vague replies. Further, we have discovered egregious practices and a starkly inadequate standard of care. When our clients return home from incarceration, they often have a myriad of health problems requiring specialized care that, if treated properly, they would not have had, sometimes with catastrophic consequences.

For example, at the beginning of the COVID Pandemic, we found that, despite the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) emergency spending on cleaning supplies, the hygiene precautions were insufficient to keep at-risk populations safe within the JCI facility. The facility logged 353 positive cases which constitutes a 6% positive rate in the completed tests. At the beginning of 2020, according to DPSCS's report from 12/28/20, JCI only reported 222 cases out of 5,574 tested, a 4.8% positivity rate. Based on these statistics and the reports of hygiene deficiency we've received from incarcerated individuals, the measures taken by the facility are inadequate to protect residents from exposure. This has been continuous in all aspects of confinement.

We have found that the healthcare provided by DSPCS' vendor, YesCare (formerly Corizon), is self-regulated with no compliance standards, and has been cited in many states for not upholding their contract of care and having their contract terminated.

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In Maryland, YesCare won the contract by bidding 680 million dollars, but that falls 132 million dollars short of providing adequate care for the contract period. On many occasions, we run into non-compliance of the very COMAR that protects incarcerated individuals. Whether caused by a lack of knowledge or a lack of process, these very challenges further violate our clients' rights to adequate and sufficient care. These organizations **CANNOT REGULATE THEMSELVES, THERE MUST BE OVERSIGHT!**

SB87/HB provides vital oversight in the correctional system and is pertinent to reforming the accessibility of quality care in Maryland's prisons. This is a legal, social, economic, and moral problem.

For these reasons, we implore the committee to return a favorable report on SB87/HB64.