

MD Catholic Conference_SB 181_FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV



SB 181
Qualifying Nonprofit Organizations - Training and Reentry Services - Funding

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 181. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 181 would appropriate state funding in the amount of \$1,000,000 for three fiscal years to enable the State of Maryland to partner with nonprofit organizations to provide vocational training in automotive repair for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

In its pastoral statement "*Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*" (USCCB, 2000), the United States conference of Catholic Bishops placed significant weight on efforts to reduce recidivism in criminal justice reform measures. The USCCB stated, "We call upon government to redirect the vast amount of public resources away from building more and more prisons and toward better and more effective programs aimed at crime prevention, rehabilitation, education efforts, substance abuse treatment, and programs of probation, parole and reintegration."

The Church maintains that systems of incarceration should be centered around restorative justice. Efforts to reduce incidences of recidivism are imperative to ensuring system-involved citizens have a legitimate chance to turn their lives around and lead productive lives upon release from incarceration. This legislation is a creative provision for exactly that.

Moreover, providing inmates with vocational skill training both prior to or upon release from prison elevates the dignity of work in our state. The Conference supports legislation that promotes access to "education..... and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labor that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives." (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 192).

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 181.

SB 181 - Qualifying Nonprofit Organizations - Trai

Uploaded by: Kam Bridges

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JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 181

Qualifying Nonprofit Organizations - Training and Reentry Services - Funding

TO: Hon. Guy Guzzone, Chair, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: January 17, 2024

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. JOTF supports Senate Bill 181 to provide grants to certain qualifying nonprofit organizations for the purpose of providing training in automotive repair to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals and creates an appropriation for the purposes of funding the grant program.

The data on returning citizens clearly displays a troubling pattern between a lack of employment opportunities and increased recidivism rates for returning citizens. The 2021 Brookings Report, *A Better Path Forward for Criminal Justice: Training and Employment for Correctional Populations*, concluded that having a job reduces recidivism and individuals are less likely to commit crimes when they have stable, full-time employment. This national trend is consistent within Maryland as well. According to the Maryland State Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services annual report on recidivism covering FY2022, recidivism is highest in the first year following release and approximately halves with each continued year after incarceration. However, the Incarceration to Employment report released by the Biden administration states that, "... formerly incarcerated persons have a 27 percent unemployment rate, exponentially higher than the overall United States unemployment rate." There is a clear and urgent need for expanded employment opportunities for returning citizens to lower Maryland's recidivism rate.

Senate Bill 181 helps to address that issue by expanding workforce development and employment options for returning citizens. Providing grant funding to qualified nonprofit organizations will allow for returning citizens to receive critical job training and reentry services from qualified providers and expands their access to a career field that provides living wages. This program will benefit Maryland by providing a path for returning citizens to reintegrate within the workforce, which strengthens the economy by both allowing them to be full participants within the economy as both taxpayers and consumers. It is also a benefit to public safety by providing legitimate avenues to self-sustaining employment, eliminating the need for returning citizens to continue to engage in illegal activities out of desperation. JOTF asserts that if Maryland is to improve its public safety and regional economy, it must continue to invest in services for returning citizens that allow them to be full participants in the Maryland economy. Senate Bill 181 is an important step toward achieving this outcome.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 181.

For more information, contact: Kam Bridges/Senior Public Policy Advocate/Kam@jotf.org

SB0181_CC_Martinez_FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV

Senate Bill 181
Qualifying Nonprofit Organizations - Training and Reentry Services – Funding
Budget and Taxation Committee
January 17, 2024
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 181, which requires the Governor to include \$1 million in the annual budget bill for fiscal years 2026 through 2028 to provide operating grants to qualifying nonprofit organizations that provide automotive repair training and reentry assistance to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities. As one of the largest human service providers in Maryland, we address barriers and provide job placement assistance to marginalized and underrepresented communities, exemplified by our collaboration with the National Center for Institutions and Alternatives to create the St. Edwards Automotive Training program. This initiative aims to inspire hope, increase self-sufficiency for people in need, and bridge the gap in rising unemployment throughout the city. With a steadfast commitment to these goals, we strongly support SB 181, and the examples below outline how we see this legislation significantly benefiting those we serve.

Expanding Opportunity for Career Growth

Additional funds would allow us to expand the number of individuals we provide training to each year. With 68% re-arrested within 3 years, our program helps address the cycle of poverty and incarceration.¹ This helps address the labor force participation decline among 25–34-year-olds in Maryland, which is more pronounced than neighboring states.²

Enhance Placement Partnerships

Additional funding would strengthen job placement services and foster partnerships with automotive repair shops, ensuring high employment rates at a median hourly wage of \$23.59 in Maryland for program graduates.³ With the national unemployment rate at 27% for formerly incarcerated individuals, our program plays a vital role in providing essential skills and facilitating job placement.¹

Building Technical Skills and Employability

Investing in additional certification programs and advanced automotive repair training helps make participants more competitive in the job market, with only 25% of the formerly incarcerated individuals having a high school, GED, or college degree at present.¹ Our program builds both hard and soft skills for stable careers.

On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB181.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Advocacy Director.

1. Prison Policy Initiative. “Recidivism and Reentry.” Prisonpolicy.org, 2019, www.prisonpolicy.org/research/recidivism_and_reentry/.
2. Office of the Comptroller of Maryland 2023 | State of the Economy.
3. U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics. “Maryland - May 2021 OEWS State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates.” Www.bls.gov, May 2022, www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_md.htm.

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January 17, 2024

TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Tiffany Clark
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: Senate Bill 181 – Qualifying Nonprofit Organizations – Training and
Reentry Services - Funding - **Favorable**

The Office of Attorney General urges this Committee to favorably report Senate Bill 181. This bill requires the Governor to include a certain appropriation in the annual budget bill to provide grants to certain nonprofit organizations to provide training in automotive repair to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals.

The United States incarcerates more people per capita than any other nation in the world. Often, when an individual is released from jail or prison, the individual lacks the appropriate support to reintegrate successfully into their communities. Studies have continuously cited barriers to education and employment opportunities as the biggest hurdles an individual must overcome after a term of imprisonment to be a successful member of their communities. Successful reentry and the reduction of recidivism depends on both the individual and the opportunities available to them upon release.

The U.S. Department of Justice has emphasized the importance of creating real, useful employment opportunities and getting buy-in from the intended participants of those opportunities, so they are invested in and enthusiastic about the possible outcomes for their life outside of jail or prison. Nonprofit organizations establish reentry programs designed to create opportunities for successful rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals released from jails and prisons into their communities by providing individuals with workforce training, access to healthcare, housing assistance and a host of other key supports.

One of the keys to a successful reentry program is proper funding. Providing grants to nonprofit organizations in the State that provide training to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals, as Senate Bill 181 proposes, would push the needle forward on this issue.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 181.

cc: Senator Cory McCray
Committee Members