



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Maryland Correctional Enterprises

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BILLS: House Bill 1488 Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund - Establishment

DATE: March 10, 2020

POSITION: Letter of Information

The passage of House Bill 1488 will negatively affect the operation of Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) and may increase inmate idleness.

Maryland Correctional Enterprises is the 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
- Provides meaningful work experiences for inmates that are intended to allow inmates to improve work habits, attitudes, and skills for the purpose of improving the employability of the inmates upon release
- 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.

MCE offers a wide array of products and services. Major product lines include meat products, furniture and furniture restoration, printing / signage, textiles, laundry services, and license plates. The passage of House Bill 1488 has the potential to significantly decrease our operations in Hagerstown, possibly resulting in the abolishment of civilian and inmate positions within our organization. Our decreased production concerns mainly include our meat plant, which was our highest revenue achiever in FY19.

Studies across the nation continue to show that involvement in a correctional industry program has a positive effect on reducing states' recidivism rates. MCE products and services maintain a "value added" component through manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, various services, clerical / computer skills, etc. As our work progresses, it has become evident that training and education in these areas have become vital to inmates' successes upon release.

DPSCS is tasked with implementation of the Justice Reinvestment Act, which would focus on offering reentry services to offenders. These reentry services include much needed vocational and training program, which MCE provides at no cost to the tax payer. Our meat plant also currently runs an apprenticeship program in conjunction with Hagerstown Community College, which enables inmates to receive a Meat Cutting Apprenticeship certification prior to release. As a result of diminished revenues, MCE may be forced to decrease its offender workforce which may have a negative impact on the recidivism rate in Maryland. Higher recidivism rates result in increased public safety and incarceration costs on both state and local levels.

A strong and vibrant MCE is in the best interest of the state. In addition to reducing recidivism, reducing inmate idleness, enhancing public / community safety and providing inmates with much needed work skills and work ethics, MCE has also transferred over \$16 million dollars to the State's General Fund since Fiscal Year 2002.

We respectfully request that you give consider this information as you deliberated on House Bill 1488. If you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to contact Catherine Kahl or Rachel Sessa at 410-260-6074.