



**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
March 10, 2020**

HB 1524 Correctional Facilities - Employment - Ex-Offenders

FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 1524, which would require that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services give a preference to bidders and offerors based on the number of formerly incarcerated individuals the bidder or offeror employs.

Studies show that employment opportunities can reduce recidivism rates.¹ Yet, for far too many Marylanders, entanglement in the criminal legal system—regardless of how minor the offense, can be a bar to opportunities for success. The collateral consequences reach far beyond employment—a criminal record may compromise one's eligibility for tuition assistance and stable housing. Moreover, these collateral consequences are particularly stark for communities of color.

For years, prisoners across the state have been working for Maryland Correctional Enterprises, generating millions in revenues—\$61.4 million in FY2016. That year, \$2.5 million was transferred to the general fund resulting in a net profit of \$600,000. Despite the enormity of the revenues generated by MCE, some inmates earn as little as \$1.25 per day, others earning \$8.75 per day.² These persons are clearly capable of employment in the public and private sectors and should be given greater job opportunities upon release.

Finally, the racial inequity at play in this context is undeniable—African Americans make up about 70% of the prison population, more than double their representation in the general population.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 1524.

¹ See for example Nally, Lockwood, Taiping, and Knutson, *The Post-Release Employment and Recidivism Among Different Types of Offenders With A Different Level of Education: A 5-Year Follow-Up Study in Indiana* (noting that recidivist offenders were likely to be unemployed or under-educated)

² HB 628 Correctional Services - Inmates – Labor, Fiscal and Policy Note (2018).

