



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
NAACP

March 9, 2020

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair
House Health and Government Operations
Committee, Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee
2 West - Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Vice Chair
House Judiciary Committee, Room 101
6 Bladen Street - House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East - Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject: FAVORABLE - SB-858/HB-1524 - Procurement and Correctional Facilities -
Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals**

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committee Members:

The NAACP Prince George's Branch supports House Bill 1524/Senate Bill 858 - Procurement and Correctional Facilities - Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals. The NAACP Prince George's County is committed to finding second chance opportunities for returning citizens who have paid their debt to society.

With unemployment rates up 37% for Maryland Returned Citizens, HB 1524/SB 858 is a much-needed bill. The Maryland Workforce Exchange website could be an invaluable tool for employers to search for talent. Consequently, the bills requirement that all employers that have a contract with the state and county departments of corrections be required to post all their jobs on the website to allow Returned Citizens to apply and be first considered for the jobs is a great opportunity for our states Returned Citizens gain valuable employment.

While the NAACP Prince Georg's County facilitates the matching of many returned citizens to community services to help reduce recidivism and to stimulate rehabilitation. One of the most effective ways to ensure their successful transition is by providing them with economic opportunities.

For many returning citizens, employment has proven to be a significant barrier to re-entry. Their criminal histories make it difficult for them to pass job screenings designed to minimize legal risk to employers.' Oftentimes, these individuals are unable to obtain adequate licensure or industry certifications to compete for employment opportunities. To make matters worse, returning are faced with justice-related debt.

According to a study published by the National Institute of Justice, approximately 62% of respondents had accrued criminal justice related financial and legal debt.' The financial hardship experienced by these individuals and their families are further compounded by the fact that many returning citizens are ineligible for government assistance programs, like the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF), because of their criminal history. House Bill 1524/SB768 will provide opportunities for returning citizens to secure employment and provide for themselves and their families.

Sincerely,



Robert Ross
President