



ALLEGHENY EAST CONFERENCE CORPORATION
of Seventh-day Adventists®

February 25, 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

RE: FAVORABLE – SB-858/HB-1524 – Health Standards – Plant-Based Meals in Prisons and Hospitals

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committees:

The Allegheny East Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (AEC) operates and oversees 170, churches, 34 companies and 9 missions with a membership of over 60,000 that reside in the states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Northern New Jersey and Washington, D.C. In Maryland alone we have approximately 174 SDA churches that represent approximately 40,000 members that include churches in the Columbia Union of churches. We are Bible-believing Christians who base faith, hope, and the future in Jesus Christ. The name 'Seventh-day' indicates our adherence to the Biblical Sabbath of Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, while 'Adventist' means we anticipate the promised return of Christ.

While our Church teaches hope in Christ, the foundation of our mission work is to reveal the character of God rooted in the principle of teaching people how to make “right choices” by studying Christ’s life of right choices. The Bible verse that demonstrates this point is in Joshua 24:15 where the call to each person on this planet is made to “choose you this day whom ye will serve”. According to the Bible, it was one bad “choice” that changed forever what was created as a perfect world into a world of pain, suffering, heart break and imprisonment.

Consequently, AEC for 40 years has grown a robust prison ministry program called Bread of Life (BOL) Ministries wherein our members on a weekly basis enters Maryland’s MCI Jessup and MCIW facilities to conduct life changing seminars and programs. Under the direction of the Louis Williams, President of the AEC Prison Ministry Federation, which operates the BOL program in four states, our Church serves as a direct line of contact with inmates that want to learn to make better choices. In 2019, 1,559 inmates attended BOL training programs in MCI and MCIW that encouraged them to make right choices.

Also, the BOL ministry has worked with hundreds of returned citizens during their transition process on matters regarding housing, food, clothing, housing and employment. However, the most difficult challenge in serving returned citizens is filling the employment gap.

Therefore, AEC is in full support of SB-858/HB-1524, which will incentivize employers that contract with Maryland's correctional agencies to hire returned citizen. The Bible teaches second chances and we believe that the goals of HB-1524 to provide Returned Citizens with a second chances to gain employment is mission critical to our efforts to bring healing to the whole person as we assist in a returned citizens transition from prison to community. Specifically, HB-1524's development of a single online website resource where employers can search for returned citizens will improve our work as transition supporters while helping the Returned Citizen to experience success outside the prison walls. Knowing that there is a single web portal that contains employers who may be searching for returned citizens give them hope not only for your future success but it strengthens their faith in the process of making right choices.

Finally, we at AEC believe that the right to work is a God given right and a having a tool like the Workforce Exchange where Returned Citizens will have a better opportunity to obtain gainful employment will ensure that Returned Citizens can live up to their God given potential as workers. Your passage of this bill will not only increase the hope of Returned Citizens that they can find and get hired for a job, HB-1524 will change the communities from which the Returned Citizens come.

It is for these reasons that AEC requests a favorable report on SB-858/HB-1550.

Sincerely,

Jackson M. Doggette, Jr., Esq.

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General Counsel