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

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee:

The U.S. spends at least 18% of its GDP (\$3.35 trillion) on health expenditures. If costs continue to rise, by 2050 Medicare and Medicaid alone will account for 20% of the GDP.<sup>1</sup> All projections point to continued rises in chronic disease. It has been stated by the American College of Lifestyle Medicine that Type 2 diabetes alone is a looming global pandemic with incalculable consequences.<sup>2</sup>

According to the American Diabetes Association, Maryland, as of 2014, Maryland spends \$6.5 Million on diabetes related illnesses.<sup>3</sup> The Maryland Department of Health reports that heart disease is the number 1 cause of death of Maryland residents. Employers lose millions of hours of productivity of employees because they suffer from chronic degenerative diseases. According to the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, 80% or more of all healthcare spending in the U.S. is tied to the treatment of conditions rooted in poor lifestyle choices.

As result of this data regarding the poor health of Maryland Residents, Thrive Baltimore was founded as a dynamic community resource center located in the Station North community of Baltimore City to address and reduce lifestyle related diseases amongst Baltimore residents through education. Run by a collective of food, environmental and social justice activists, our mission is to provide education, resources and support to anyone interested in adopting a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle to become more productive citizens.

Part of Thrive Baltimore's mission is to help grow a healthy and sustainable Baltimore community where every resident focuses on the health and welfare of others in order to grow a healthy community. Thrive supports HB-1524 because we believe that gainful employment is at the heart of growing a healthy community. Specifically, we believe that having healthy Returned Citizens that are given opportunity to work is essential for the continued grow and development of Baltimore. Thrive is committed to supporting Returned Citizens

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<sup>1</sup> See Lifestyle Medicine Economic Research - <https://lmeconomicresearch.org/>

<sup>2</sup> See What is Lifestyle Medicine <https://www.lifestylemedicine.org/What-is-Lifestyle-Medicine>

<sup>3</sup> See "The Burden of Diabetes in Maryland" - American Diabetes Association, Maryland - <http://main.diabetes.org/dorg/PDFs/Advocacy/burden-of-diabetes/maryland.pdf>

in their transition to the civilian work by providing Plant-Based nutrition courses so that Returned Citizens can ensure that Returned Citizens are healthy on the job and provide the best work productivity to employers.

Our supportive Lifestyle Medicine services are critical to the success of a Returned Citizens transition into a new work environment and community. We're dedicated to encouraging people to make healthier, kinder choices that will enable them to live more conscious lifestyles. At the end day, when returned citizens are healthy and have the opportunity for employment, entire communities benefit and prosper.

Therefore, we request a favorable report for HB-1524/SB-858.

Sincerely,

*Adam Weissman*

Adam Weissman  
Community Relations Manager