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HB 1524

Procurement and Correctional Facilities – Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Sheriff's Office Position: **Oppose**

TO: Health and Government Operations Committee

DATE: March 10, 2020

FROM: Brandon Foster, Director of Corrections

Sheriff Troy Berry firmly supports detention center programs and services that help inmates with employment. The Sheriff's Office strives to develop and maintain such programs. One such program in Charles County Detention Center comes through a partnership with the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) for their EARN grant. EARN (Employment Advancement Right Now) is a state-funded workforce development program, aimed at getting people the skills and certifications to enter into the skilled labor force. With this grant, CSM developed a 110-hour course of instruction called the "Pre-Apprenticeship Program", which consists of six courses. Upon completion, successful participants receive industry-recognized certificates from the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core Curriculum, as well as certification cards for OSHA 10-Hour Construction, ATSSA Flagger, and NSC CPR/First Aid. The College of Southern Maryland invited the jail's Classification Team to sit on a panel and attend quarterly meetings discussing and developing the program. During the winter of 2019, CSM was awarded the EARN grant with funding for approximately fifty students, with ten of the spots reserved for Charles County inmates.

During the spring of 2019, the Detention Center began the selection process for inmate applications to the Pre-Apprenticeship Program, and in July 2019 eight inmates began taking classes. CSM is able to accommodate and instruct five of the six parts of the curriculum inside of jail. Upon the inmates' release from the Detention Center, inmates who have completed the first five parts report to CSM to begin the sixth and final part of the program. In addition to the six courses of instruction, the College includes resume building, and job interviews as part of the program to assist individuals with gaining employment upon completion.

Assisting formerly incarcerated persons with employment is important. Our focus should be in the areas of training, education, and employer incentives. This bill focuses on none of these.

SB 858 would only complicate the contract bidding processes for local correctional facilities and contractors. It requires contractors to submit reports, advertise job openings on a State website, hire formerly incarcerated persons by mandate, and develop new policy. It requires local government to accept bids only from contractors who meet these requirements and exclude those who do not. The burdensome requirements of this bill would likely deter contractors from bidding on these contracts. Ultimately, the bill makes the contract process lengthier, less competitive, and will not further the goal of increasing employment opportunities for former inmates.

The Sheriff's Office strongly opposes this bill. We ask this Committee for an unfavorable report on SB858.