



## Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

### Office of the Secretary Office of Government and Legislative Affairs

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**BILL: SENATE BILL 157**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

**EXPLANATION:** This bill establishes that an employer may not be held liable for negligently hiring or failing to adequately supervise an employee based on evidence that the employee has received probation before judgment for an offense or has been convicted of an offense if the employee meets specified criteria and performs specified types of work for the employer.

#### **COMMENTS:**

- The Department's Division of Correction (DOC) operates approximately 17 State correctional facilities, which house offenders sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also runs the Baltimore City Jail, which houses pretrial detainees and inmates sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and less. The Department also operates the Division of Parole and Probation, which oversees offenders court-ordered to serve community supervision or paroled from State or local correctional facilities.
- Providing robust rehabilitative and reentry services is a key focus of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) since over 92% of the incarcerated population will be returning to communities all over the State of Maryland.
- To emphasize the importance of reentry services, the Secretary established an Assistant Secretary of Programs, Treatment, and Reentry Services in August 2019. This position and the various units reporting to this position are responsible for bolstering re-entry services for the incarcerated population under DPSCS's oversight. Connecting the returning population to job opportunities and employment is a key focus of this expanded commitment to re-entry services.

- Under the new Assistant Secretary of Programs, Treatment, and Re-entry Services, DPSCS held the first of a series of re-entry symposiums in December 2019. These community events connect DPSCS and the incarcerated population directly with employers in related fields to build stronger connections between existing workforce development programs and current post-release job opportunities.
- Despite acquiring essential job skills and training while incarcerated, it remains difficult for returning offenders to obtain gainful employment in the community.
- The immunity provision of SB 157 will have a positive impact on businesses, as they will avoid lawsuits when hiring formerly ex-offenders, which will incentivize businesses to employ these individuals.
- This bill will help improve employment prospects for ex-offenders and provide hope for a successful reentry.

**CONCLUSION:** For these reasons, the Department respectfully requests this Committee give a **FAVORABLE** vote on Senate Bill 157.