



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of the Secretary Office of Government and Legislative Affairs

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BILL: HOUSE BILL 1203

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: This bill establishes the Workgroup to Study the Integration of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Within State and Local Government First Safety Operations to study ways to integrate unmanned aircraft systems technology within local and State government functions as it relates to fire fighting and emergency management situations.

COMMENTS:

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services operates 17 State correctional facilities that 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's top priority is the safety and security of its inmates, employees and the public. The Department does not have experience in fire safety operation matters, and is not the appropriate entity to staff the workgroup as proposed by the bill.
- HB 1203 establishes a Workgroup to Study the Integration of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Within State and Local Government First Safety Operations. The purpose of the Workgroup is to identify ways to integrate unmanned aircraft systems technology within local state government functions as it relates to: emergencies involving significant property loss; emergency management; firefighting; and search and rescue, as well as operate a pilot program to train unmanned aircraft operators to operate unmanned aircraft systems.
- In addition, HB 1203 requires the Governor include an appropriation to the Department of State Police to provide research, and equipment and training in support of a pilot program to train unmanned aircraft system operators.
- This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to staff the workgroup.

- As stated above, the Department maintains and operates the State prison system, and does not have expertise in fire safety operations. As such, the Department is not the appropriate agency to staff this workgroup.
- An agency that has expertise in emergency management and fire safety operations, and is familiar with unmanned aircraft system technology and how it can be applied to emergency situations is much better suited to staff this workgroup.

CONCLUSION: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates on House Bill 1203.