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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 16 – Correctional Services - Immigration Detention – Prohibition
(Dignity Not Detention Act)
Judiciary
March 3, 2021
Support

AFSCME Council 3 strongly supports HB 16. This bill prohibits the State or any local jurisdiction from entering into an agreement relating to the establishment of an immigration detention facility owned or operated by a private entity. The bill prohibits the State or any local jurisdiction from approving a zoning variance or permit for the construction or reuse of buildings that will be used by private entities as an immigration detention facility without first notifying the public and holding public meetings for comment. The bill also prohibits the State or any local jurisdiction from entering into or renewing an immigration detention agreement.

AFSCME Council 3 represents correctional officers in our state's prisons. Admittedly we regularly butt heads with management over staffing, wages and working conditions. All too often the issues we discuss with management have direct, negative impacts and consequences on the safety of staff and inmates if they go unresolved. Lack of appropriate levels of staffing harm the ability to implement and maintain ongoing education and rehabilitation programs.

HOWEVER, we can and do engage with management, raise these issues and alert the public by blowing the whistle on poor conditions when they exist. For privatized prisons and for-profit detention facilities, there are no whistleblowers, no public servants that look to serve their community with dignity and respect for the lives of others. The bottom line is the last line on the profit ledger: is it big enough? If not, what more can be cut back and squeezed out of employees and programs to enhance that profit?

For-profit imprisonment and detention are among the most immoral institutions imaginable – there is no goal of adjudication, or rehabilitation and societal reincorporation. It's all about the money. AFSCME Council 3 asks for a moral, favorable report of this legislation.

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An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
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