

In Support of HB102 (Judiciary Committee hearing January 26, 2021)

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To the honorable Assembly:

My name is Julian Holman. I am a graduate student at the University of Maryland Baltimore County and a member of the University System of Maryland Anti-Prison Labor Coalition, also known as Divest MCE. I wish to express my support for HB102 before you.

Spending time in prison halves annual earning potential, resulting in substantial loss over the course of one's career and hurting the families of incarcerated people. Bringing the minimum compensation rate for prison labor up to the State minimum wage - and preventing the various deductions, such as room and board, already made to salaries presently as low as 17 cents per hour - will reduce this harm. However, the Maryland carceral system as a whole will continue to hurt those subjugated by it: 70 percent of its prisoners are Black, and yet Black Americans only make up 30 percent of the state population. *This means that, for pennies a day, a largely Black prison population produces items such as the Maryland license plates on the car you ride in, the chairs and desks we sit at in a Maryland school or state house, and the masks and hand sanitizer used by yourselves and other state employees to combat COVID-19.* The racism and injustice that Black Americans experience in every societal institution has never been more apparent. The true solution to the problem is to remove any incentive to imprison our most vulnerable and profit off of their blood, sweat, and tears. Until a divestment bill can be passed, partnership with unions and trade associations to develop more relevant training programs/educational courses, providing participants fairer pay, and holding the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services accountable to reporting to the Governor and Assembly will orient Maryland Correctional Enterprises away from profiteering and towards rehabilitation, empowering incarcerated Marylanders.

I thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony in favor of HB102.