

In Support of SB872 (Budget and Taxation Committee hearing March 10, 2022)

Julian Holman
Fort Washington, MD 20744

To the honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee:

My name is Julian Holman. I am a recent graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) 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 SB872.

Under current procurement law, State entities such as UMBC and other Maryland higher education institutions *must* first purchase supplies and services from Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE). The estimated \$10 million in annual sales - 25% of revenue - MCE obtains from these entities is \$10 million that does not go to Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) or to the Employment Works Program, which are preferred providers after MCE. It is \$10 million that does not go to small, minority-owned, women-owned, or other disadvantaged businesses in our community. It is \$10 million that does not even support those providing supplies and services that MCE sells: those who are incarcerated.

Black people make up just 30 percent of Maryland's population but account for 70 percent of those incarcerated in our state. This proportion is greater than anywhere else in the USA. Those who hold jobs in prison may make a 5 day daily rate of as low as \$1.36 according to MCE's 2021 report. MCE advertises that they may spend this income on commissary and/or supporting family. However, pay may be reduced by court-mandated deductions, and commissary prices may be inflated. *Ultimately, for little to nothing, an overwhelmingly 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.*

This shameful fact tarnishes the pride I otherwise feel to be a graduate of one of the finest research institutions in the nation. Slavery continues to exist and to be legal under the 13th Amendment, which reads "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted**, shall exist within the United States." By giving choice in procurement to Maryland higher education institutions, we can make real strides towards ending slavery.

I respectfully urge the committee to return a favorable report on **SB872**.