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Patrick Moran – President

SB 194 - State Procurement - Maryland Correctional Enterprises - Waiver

Budget and Taxation Committee January 18, 2024

UNFAVORABLE

AFSCME Council 3 opposes SB 194. This legislation requires the Department of General Services to grant a waiver to state entities who seek exemption from the procurement preference that the Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) currently has in circumstances where the needed supplies or services are at least 10% above market rates; or when the time needed to deliver the supplies and services do not meet the entity's need.

We represent 140 correctional officers who work at MCE. Their job is to provide supervision and training to over 1,000 incarcerated individuals annually who utilize the program to develop job skills for re-entry. This legislation could have a significant impact on those services, without a suitable replacement. Agencies may be able to spend less by procuring supplies from abroad made in sweatshops, but a policy decision was made years ago that a better way for agencies to spend money is to support job training for incarcerated individuals.

We think it makes sense to improve MCE, rather than throwing it out. Our officers report that the most pressing issue currently is not lengthy delivery times, but rather, a lack of storage facilities for all the work orders they have completed for agencies who have experienced delays with their renovation projects. Our members report that they are generally getting supplies produced and delivered within 6 weeks of a work order coming in. MCE can, and often does, provide additional financial incentives to incarcerated individuals to complete projects on time. Staffing improvement must be made too. In a shop with only 1 employee, if that employee is sick for the day, no work can happen that day.

Please provide an unfavorable report on SB 194.

