



190 W. Ostend St., #101  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: 410-547-1515  
Email: [info@afscmemd.org](mailto:info@afscmemd.org)

Patrick Moran – President

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**HB 1151 - State Procurement - Preferred Providers –  
Removal of Maryland Correctional Enterprise  
Health and Government Operations  
February 20, 2024**

**UNFAVORABLE**

AFSCME Council 3 respectfully opposes HB 1151. This legislation removes the preferred provider designation the Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) currently receives in state procurement law. We represent 140 correctional officers who work at MCE. Their job is to provide supervision and training to over 1,100 incarcerated individuals annually who utilize the program to develop job skills for re-entry and stay active during their incarceration to earn income while they are employed with MCE. This legislation could have a significant impact on those services, without a suitable replacement.

As a procurement bill, AFSCME is concerned that HB 1151 will lead to more inefficiencies. Under the bill, the direct sales relationship state agencies have with MCE is replaced with a system where agencies can each now individually procure large volumes of goods. This increases the potential for waste, fraud, and abuse if not properly monitored and staffed. We are also concerned that HB 1151 shifts procurement policy to allow agencies to yes, perhaps spend less by procuring supplies and goods made for instance abroad in sweatshops but the more noble goal, and intent of the procurement preference, is to encourage state agencies to spend money here in Maryland to support job training and activities for incarcerated individuals.

As an inmate labor rights bill, we're afraid that HB 1151 does nothing to address these issues either. Our members who work at MCE tell us that incarcerated individuals are quite upset at the prospect of MCE closing. They fear this will lead to more time in their cells with nothing to do, and no way to make money. The implications HB 1151 could have on morale in our state prisons is significant.

Instead of throwing out MCE, we should work to improve it – including paying incarcerated individuals more when they chose to work for MCE. Reducing activities and re-entry services for incarcerated individuals, which will be the consequence of HB 1151, is the wrong direction to take. Instead, we should improve and increase these services. We should also resist efforts to privatize this work which could happen if we remove MCE's preferred provider status without providing a suitable alternative within DPSCS. Please provide an unfavorable report on HB 1151.