



BILL: House Bill 1151 – State Procurement - Preferred Providers - Removal of Maryland Correctional Enterprises

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

DATE: February 20, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

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Honorable Committee Members:

On behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Student Government Association (UMBC SGA), I offer this testimony in support of House Bill 1151, which removes the Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) as a preferred provider of supplies and services for state procurements.

While the intent behind MCE is commendable, its current operation raises serious ethical concerns. The 13th Amendment's exception for involuntary servitude within prisons has enabled MCE to operate in ways resembling modern day slavery. Incarcerated individuals are paid subpar wages, often far below minimum wage, and lack adequate labor protections. This system exacerbates economic disadvantage for incarcerated individuals, making it difficult for them to successfully reintegrate into society upon release, and hinders rehabilitation efforts.

Sadly, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), and other University System of Maryland (USM) institutions actively sustain this exploitative system. They are legally mandated to purchase products from MCE as established by the Code of Maryland article §14–103 (a.1.). As stated, “A State or State-aided or controlled entity shall buy supplies and services from Maryland Correctional Enterprise[...] if Maryland Correctional Enterprises provides the supplies or services.” The University System of Maryland (USM) is a primary stakeholder, and its purchases in 2018 constitute 18.2% of [MCE’s total sales from 2018](#).

UMBC strives to be a community of inclusive excellence. The practice of purchasing furniture, other commodities, and services from MCE is antithetical to these goals. UMBC has a civic responsibility to leverage its power to promote actions that align with these values.

Continuing to support MCE raises serious ethical concerns regarding the treatment of incarcerated individuals and the exploitation of their labor. It's crucial to align with ethical procurement practices that uphold human rights.

Accordingly, UMBC SGA respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill 1151.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jaden Farris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "J".

Jaden Farris

Director of Government Affairs
Student Government Association
University of Maryland, Baltimore County