



## Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

### Office of the Secretary

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**BILL:** HOUSE BILL 471

STATE OF MARYLAND

**POSITION:** LETTER OF CONCERN

WES MOORE  
GOVERNOR

**EXPLANATION:** House Bill 471 would prohibit a unit of State Government or a political subdivision of the State from deploying or operating an unmanned aircraft, commonly referred to as drones, for surveillance, evidence collection, or any other purpose unless conducted pursuant to a warrant or within narrowly defined exceptions, including search and rescue operations, fresh pursuit, locating an escaped prisoner, or countering a terrorist threat. The bill further provides that any evidence obtained outside of these exceptions would be deemed inadmissible in any trial.

ARUNA MILLER  
LT. GOVERNOR

CAROLYN J. SCRUGGS  
SECRETARY

ANTHONY A. GASKINS  
CHIEF OF STAFF

### COMMENTS:

OLUWATOYIN BAKARE  
ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY  
ADMINISTRATION

DAVID GREENE  
DEPUTY SECRETARY  
OPERATIONS

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services' (Department) Division of Correction operates 13 State correctional facilities housing individuals sentenced to periods of incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also oversees five facilities located in Baltimore City that houses pretrial detainees and incarcerated individuals sentenced to incarceration for periods of 18 months and less.
- HB 471 would create a significant and adverse operational impact on public safety, correctional security, and criminal investigations within the Department.
- The DPSCS Intelligence and Investigative Division (IID) utilizes FAA-certified unmanned aircraft as a critical force multiplier to enhance public safety, prevent criminal activity, and maintain the security of state correctional facilities.
- All sworn IID personnel authorized to operate drones are fully compliant with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, including completion of required airspace authorization applications and certification as remote pilots. Drone operations are already subject to robust federal oversight,

strict operational safety requirements, and internal policy controls.

- A primary operational use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems by IID is targeted surveillance to prevent the introduction of contraband into state correctional facilities, including narcotics, weapons, and cellular devices. These activities often occur in dynamic, time-sensitive environments where advance notice is limited or nonexistent.
- Requiring a warrant for all drone deployments—absent the bill’s narrow exceptions—would severely restrict IID’s ability to respond proactively to emerging threats, monitor known contraband drop zones, and disrupt criminal activity before it endangers staff, incarcerated individuals, or the public.

**CONCLUSION:** The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates House Bill 471.