

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



Honorary Chairs

Robert Ehrlich
Former Governor

Stuart O. Simms
Former Secretary DPSCS

Executive Committee

Diamonte Brown
BCPS teacher

Philip Caroom
Retired Judge

Charles Chappell
*Former inmate; former
Manager for Correctional
Enterprises at JCI*

Candy Clark
Unitarian Universalist

Vince Greco
*Maryland C.U.R.E.
Out for Justice
JCI Prison Scholars Program
Extra-Legalese Group, Inc.*

Lea Green
Maryland C.U.R.E.

Jerry McLaurin
People for Change Coalition

Bob Rhudy
*Past Director of Mediation,
Court of Special Appeals*

Jim Rose
Patapsco Friends

Glennor Shirley
*Retired Director of DPSCS
Library Services*

TO: Chair Bobby Zirkin & Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Phil Caroom and Jim Rose, MAJR Executive Committee
DATE: February 12, 2019

SB 527 / HB 78 would require Maryland's Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) annually to report disaggregated statistics as to the numbers of inmates employed, divided by facility, unit, rate of pay, job classification, and participation—or not—in Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE).

The cost for such reports should be small since DPSCS necessarily already must track such information in order to pay wages—mostly nominal at \$1.25 per day for unskilled positions—and to grant diminution credits to each participating inmate.

But, the value of such reports to legislators, administrators and advocates should be large.

MCE—whose employment training is a rare gem in DPSCS facilities—in FY18 employed only 1,789—only 9 percent of all Maryland inmates. (Previously, in FY16, the total MCE employed was over 2,000 and above 10% of all inmates. Why the drop?) Post-prison employment for successfully MCE participants is high and their recidivism is low—at least 1/3 better than other inmates.

With this commendable rate for successful inmate rehabilitation, legislators and administrators should have as a top priority the exploration of how MCE could be expanded further to every facility and offered to every eligible inmate. What prevents this? The statistics could help start this important discussion.

Reporting on inmate earnings also might raise important questions for discussion by victims and inmates' families. If a fair market wage were paid, could inmates literally pay their debts to society by satisfying restitution and child support obligations? Could they develop “nest eggs” that would enable them to pay their living expenses while looking for honest work upon release?

For all these reasons, Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) strongly supports SB 527 / HB 78 and urge the Committee to give it a favorable report.

NOTE: This testimony is joined by Phil Caroom as part of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform and not as a representative of the Maryland Judiciary.