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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
SB 698 – Division of Parole and Probation – Central Home Detention Unit - Powers
Judicial Proceedings
March 10, 2020
Support

AFSCME supports SB 698. This bill allows the Director of the Division of Parole and Probation to authorize employees from the Central Home Detention Unit (CHDU) to have police powers.

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) established the Central Home Detention Unit to supervise individuals who are awaiting adjudication of their charges. An offender in this program is monitored by electronic devices as well as direct contact with HDU employees. Currently, there are 36 enforcement officers in this program that are responsible for monitoring 154 inmates and 16 pretrial release detainees.

Employees in the Central Home Detention Unit must qualify under training standards prescribed by the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission in order to obtain a Special Police Officers Certification (a mandatory requirement of their employment).

Employees in the HDU do much of their work in the community visiting individuals in and near their home. While they perform many important functions, their action is limited because they do not have full police powers. If given powers of policing authority, they would be far more effective in doing their job and serving their communities. As an example, if an employee is visiting someone at their home and observes illegal activities taking place, all they can do is call for the police to come. By that time, the activities will no longer be taking place.

There are some items in the fiscal note that are questionable. For example, there is nothing in the bill that mandates that employees must get new vehicles as a result of this bill.

This bill makes the CHDU more effective and more efficient. We urge you to provide a favorable report.

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An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
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