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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 1476 – Independent Oversight and Review Board for Health Care of Inmates
in State Correctional Facilities - Establishment
Judiciary
March 6, 2020
Support

AFSCME Council 3 strongly supports HB 1476. This legislation would establish an Independent Oversight and Review Board for Health Care of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities.

Correctional officers in Maryland are charged with protecting the public, its employees, and detainees, and offenders under its supervision. Part of the responsibility of protecting detainees and offenders is ensuring their healthcare needs are addressed.

We strongly support the creation of an advisory board – that includes the union as a member – to oversee inmate health care needs. One recommendation we have for improving inmate health: make the inmate health providers state employees again! When health staff were state employees, they were paid a proper wage and provided state benefits. Jobs such as these are careers that employees take pride in. Presently, inmate health care needs are provided by contractual employees. Any corrections officer can tell you that much of the contraband illegally spirited into our prisons are smuggled in by poorly paid contractual employees who will risk losing a poor-paying job to supplement their meager earnings.

Furthermore, since the provision of health care to inmates has been privatized, costs to the state have actually increased, while oversight and quality assurance have lessened. Ensuring quality, affordable health care for inmates is not just the right thing, it's also a smart thing for the state to do.

For the above-stated reasons, AFSCME Council 3 asks for a favorable report of HB 1476.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
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