



190 W. Ostend St., #101  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: 410-547-1515  
Email: info@afscmemd.org

Patrick Moran – President

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**HB 536 - Correctional Services Apprenticeship Start-Up Grant Program –  
Establishment  
Economic Matters Committee  
February 21, 2024**

**LETTER OF INFORMATION**

AFSCME Council 3 is the exclusive bargaining representative for thousands of state employees who work for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), including in custody and non-custody positions in our state prisons juvenile services facilities. HB 536 establishes a Correctional Services Apprenticeship Start-Up Grant Program in the MD Department of Labor.

We respectfully submit the following information to the committee when considering this bill:

1. The bill appears to be specific to local correctional facilities, where AFSCME does not currently represent employees, but this should be specified by including a definition on pg. 1 of the bill, at line 22:

**Pg. 1, line 22 of HB 536: (A)(2): A correctional unit, as defined in § 2-401 of the Correctional Services Article, but not including an entity described in § 2-401(b)(2)(i) or (ii) of the Correctional Services Article;**

2. In DPSCS, the minimum age for both a state correctional officer and a juvenile services resident advisor is 21. And for good reason, DPSCS previously tried to lower the age of state correctional officers to 18 years, and this did not go well. Similarly, case management and other clinical positions in the state prisons and juvenile facilities where we represent staff have important degree requirements. This makes setting up youth apprenticeships for high school students for these positions impossible without severely downgrading the qualifications of these positions, of which we are opposed to. To further this point, the state prisons presently have a cadet program that has extremely limited utility as only those 21 and older *and* who have completed the correctional academy are permitted to staff a prison post.
3. AFSCME supports developing apprenticeship programs within our units, only upon signed agreement after being able to exercise our bargaining rights as the exclusive bargaining representative. This includes bargaining over which positions are apprenticeable.

To this end, we have suggested amendments to a similar bill - SB 470 Growing Apprenticeships and the Public Safety Workforce (GAPS) Act, that are also relevant to HB 536:

On pg. 3, line 26 of HB 536: Replace with –

**(II) Have the consent of any exclusive representative representing employees of the correctional service**

If the intent of HB 536 is to include the state corrections department, this amendment is mandatory for our support of the bill.

We appreciate that the Moore Administration supports the development of apprenticeships and the critical role that exclusive bargaining representatives have in the success of these programs. We hope that the committee considers the above information as they consider HB 536.

If we can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact AFSCME Council 3 Legislative Director Denise Gilmore at [dgilmore@afscmemd.org](mailto:dgilmore@afscmemd.org).

