



TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 574 – DISTRICT COURT – JOBS COURT PILOT PROGRAM

February 18, 2020

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GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supports Senate Bill 574, which would establish the Jobs Court Pilot Program in the District Court. The stated goal of the Jobs Court Program is to “reduce recidivism by offering defendants an opportunity to participate in full-time job training and job placement programs as a condition of probation or as an alternative to incarceration.” The “Jobs Court” model follows the framework of other specialty courts, such as Drug Court or Mental Health Court, which have proven to be successful programs that serve as an alternative to incarceration while providing targeted services using a rehabilitative model under structured supervision.

Employment is a key factor in reducing recidivism, but many offenders lack the skills necessary to obtain sustained employment. Connecting these individuals with workforce training opportunities that will equip them with the skills necessary to obtain and maintain meaningful employment would be a positive step towards reducing recidivism and strengthening the workforce. Additionally, providing job training as an alternative to incarceration prevents the myriad of negative consequences that arise during and following the period of incarceration, including negative impacts on families and children.

The GBC-led Coalition for a Second Chance is focused on policy change and employer engagement to increase job training and employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated and justice-involved populations. Senate Bill 574 is consistent with the efforts of the GBC and the Coalition to support intervention programs that provide individuals with education, job training, and access to needed services.

Senate Bill 574 is also consistent with the Greater Baltimore Committee’s 2020 Legislative Priorities which call for policymakers to join together in a coordinated approach that reduces crime while simultaneously addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, joblessness, and a lack of education or workforce training. Specifically, the priorities encourage policymakers to increase efforts to implement programs that address trauma, addiction, and mental health, and provide access to rehabilitative treatment, education, and workforce training.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 574.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 65-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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