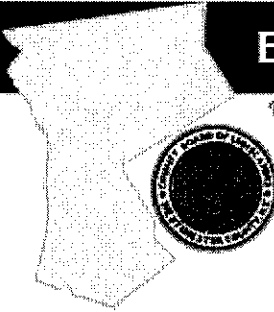


Damon R. Maher
Legislator, 10th District
Chair, Labor & Housing



Committee Assignments
Budget & Appropriations
Intergovernmental Services
Parks, Planning & Economic Development
Public Safety
Seniors & Constituencies

MEMORANDUM

TO: Benjamin Boykin, Chair, Board of Legislators
FROM: Damon R. Maher, Legislator – 10th District
DATE: September 17, 2018
RE: **Article – *Private prison uses forced immigrant labor in Georgia***

Please add the attached article entitled “Private prison uses forced immigrant labor in Georgia” from the Southern Poverty Law Center Fall 2019 to the consent agenda for referral to the Public Safety committee on behalf of Legislator Maher.

Private prison uses forced immigrant labor in Georgia

The SPLC has filed suit against CoreCivic Inc., a private prison company under contract with Stewart County, Georgia, for forcing immigrants who've been detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to work for as little as \$1 a day to clean, cook, and maintain the detention center in a scheme to maximize profits.

Detained immigrants at Stewart Detention Center who refuse to work are threatened with solitary confinement and the loss of access to basic necessities, like food, clothing, products for personal hygiene, and phone calls to loved ones, in violation of federal anti-trafficking laws, according to the lawsuit.

Similar lawsuits have been filed in California, Washington, Colorado and Texas, challenging private prison companies' work practices.

Profits over people

"CoreCivic is placing profits above people by forcing detained immigrants to perform manual labor for next to nothing, saving millions of dollars that would otherwise provide jobs and stimulate the local economy," said Meredith

Stewart, senior attorney for the SPLC. "CoreCivic is padding its pockets by violating anti-trafficking laws."

The "Dollar-a-Day" program creates a lucrative profit scenario for CoreCivic: Detained immigrants are forced to purchase basic necessities from

CoreCivic's commissary, and the primary way to fund their purchases is to participate in the work program that is necessary for the operation of the facility. These jobs include providing basic functions at the facility like cooking and cleaning, work for which CoreCivic

would otherwise have to hire and pay outside employees.

Plaintiff Wilhen Hill Barrientos is an asylum seeker from Guatemala who has been detained for 38 months while his case is pending. When he arrived at Stewart Detention Center, he was faced with a difficult decision - either work

for nearly nothing or lose access to basic necessities, safety and privacy.

Slave labor

Refusing to work would mean that Barrientos would not have enough money to pay for costly phone calls to his family, and that he would likely be moved from a two-person prison cell to an open dorm that has few bathrooms, round-the-clock lighting and frequent fights; or that he would be placed into solitary confinement.

"When I arrived at Stewart I was faced with an impossible choice - either work

for a few cents an hour or live without basic things like soap, shampoo, deodorant and food," Barrientos said.

No paid kitchen staff

He chose to work to live with some privacy and maintain access to the commissary.

"If I didn't work, I would never be able to call my family," said Barrientos, who works in the kitchen, cooking meals for up to 2,000 people each day.

For his work, Barrientos receives at most \$4 to \$5 per day for six to eight hours of work; approximately 50 cents per hour.

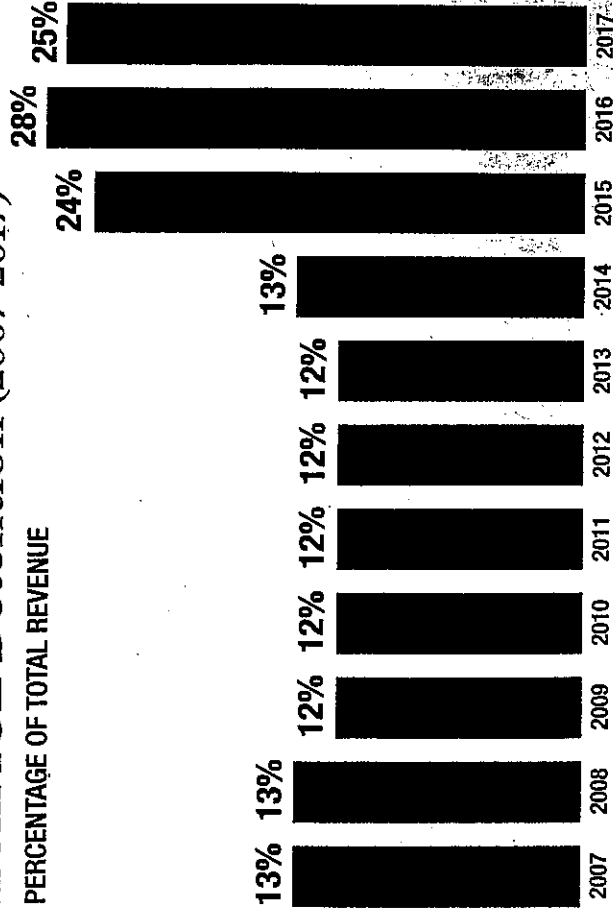
Because Stewart has no paid kitchen staff, officers usually require Barrientos to work seven days a week, even when he is sick.

Barrientos was sent to medical segregation for two months after he filed a grievance for being forced to work while he was sick. In 2014, current and former detained immigrants who were forced to work at private detention centers began to file class action lawsuits alleging violations of federal and state labor laws.

The SPLC filed the lawsuit against CoreCivic in conjunction with the Law Office of R. Andrew Free, Project South, and Burns Charest LLP.

Percent of CoreCivic's Revenues from ICE Detention (2007-2017)

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL REVENUE



SOURCE: CoreCivic Annual Reports

Shares in CoreCivic continue to rise as federal spending on Immigration and Customs Enforcement rises. The for-profit company told reporters recently that "this is probably the most robust kind of sales environment we've seen in probably 10 years." In 2016, the DOJ's Office of Inspector General found that private prison conditions are more dangerous than government-run facilities.