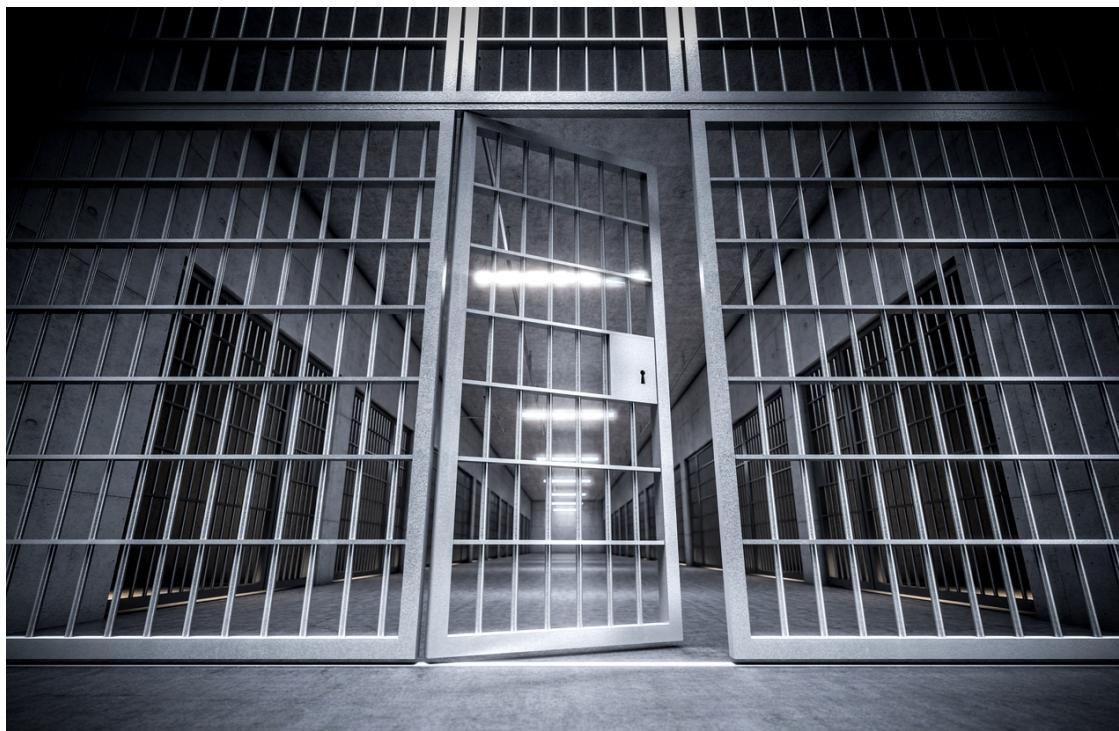


Baltimore doesn't need a \$1.2 billion jail – it needs jobs

written by Lev Koufax

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Baltimore City local news publication, the Baltimore Banner, recently reported that the cost of a new state constructed jail in the city would cost more than originally thought. Initially estimated to be a \$1 billion investment, which already made the

most expensive project of any kind in Maryland history – the “state of the art” concentration camp for the poor will now cost [\\$1.2 billion](#).

Governor Moore and the Maryland Department of Correctional Services have framed the new prison as a much-needed upgrade to decrease crowding and improve living conditions. However, local prisoner rights advocacy groups have expressed doubt that the \$1.2 billion facility would do either of these. The fact is, the Maryland state government and the army of contractors that will build and equip this prison do not care about the conditions of prisoners. They care about two things: more prisoners and a [bigger paycheck](#).

Maryland’s Department of Correctional Services has already spent \$54 million on planning, even as the state faces critical budget deficits that the Governor has used to [justify](#) cuts to the state workforce and social welfare programs. Governor Moore’s [cuts](#), combined with the ongoing inflation crisis combined with Donald Trump’s slashing of social benefits, have already battered Baltimore.

The city is facing its highest unemployment rate in years, at 5.5%. In his budget for fiscal year 25, Governor Moore nearly froze raises for state workers and delayed the implementation of Maryland’s new family leave program another 18 months. Yet, the new Baltimore City jail construction is all aboard, full steam ahead, and the State of Maryland continues to spend nearly [\\$288 million a year](#) on incarcerating Baltimore City residents.

Baltimore doesn’t need another massive concentration camp. The city already makes up 32% of the state’s prison population, while only accounting for 10% of the overall state population. Baltimore is not only the largest city in the state, but also the home of the largest Black community in the state. This new jail is simply aimed at sharpening the oppression of an oppressed working-class Black city.

US politicians, courts, and bureaucrats insist that the purpose of the country’s

massive incarceration system is rehabilitation and prevention. This assertion couldn't be further from the truth. As with so many institutions under capitalism, the motivation behind the massive prison system that operates at federal, state, and local levels is simply and solely profit.

Construction contractors make profit from building the facilities. Medical supply magnates rake in millions supplying equipment and medicine to prisons that rarely, if ever, use them effectively. The need for uniforms, beds, light fixtures, furniture, and plumbing all provide a boon for the [parasitic prison supply industry](#) that has grown like a weed since the 1980s. And this analysis doesn't even account for the labor actually done by prisoners once the prison is up and running.

Across Baltimore, Maryland, and the Country, prisoners - who are disproportionately Black and Brown - work for cents in wages creating all sorts of goods and providing all sorts of services. In as recently as 2024, the Associated Press investigated a supply chain that used [prison labor](#) to slaughter cattle, fish in dangerous waters, and work long hours picking produce in fields. All of these goods find their way to companies like Coca-Cola, General Mills, and Kroger to be sold for exponentially more than the prison laborers were paid.

Baltimore's new jail is just another avenue for profit in a national prison industrial system that only cares about the bottom line. Not a single city across the country needs more concentration camps for the poor. Those cities need [jobs, healthcare, and education](#).



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2026/01/10/baltimore-doesnt-need-a-1-2-billion-jail-it-needs-jobs/>