



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 397

Correctional Services – Diminution Credits - Education

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 10, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
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Representation Project
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Maryland Community Action
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Maryland Hunger Solutions
Paul's Place
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Marylanders Against Poverty

Stacey Jefferson, Co-Chair
P: 410-637-1900 ext 8578
C: 443-813-9231

E: stacey.jefferson@bhsbaltimore.org

Julia Gross, Co-Chair
P: 410-528-0021x6029

E: jgross@mdhungersolutions.org

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 397, which encourages individuals who are incarcerated to seek educational advancement by providing diminution credits to those who successfully obtain a certificate of completion of a technical or vocational training program, a GED, a high school diploma, an associate degree, or a bachelor's degree while they are behind the wall.

Access to educational programming while incarcerated should be encouraged and supported. Currently, Maryland's mandatory education law require inmates who do not have a diploma, and are serving 18 months or more, to attend educational classes; however, it does not encourage or reward individuals for completing the GED curriculum. Diminution credits are provided for attending vocational and education courses, but not for completing programs. As a result, many educational programs behind the wall have waiting lists as there is no incentive for completing the programs once someone is enrolled. Providing diminutions credits for completing an educational program would create a faster rotation of open slots for new students.

Expanding diminution credits for advancement in education is sound public safety policy, as access to educational programming is critical for successful reentry into the community. Studies show that individuals who have a GED and advanced educational opportunities are less likely to recidivate than individuals who are returning to the community without advance education. Additionally, individuals who have obtained a certificate of higher education while incarcerated have a greater likelihood of locating employment and economic security upon release.

Encouraging educational advancement through diminution credits is cost-effective. During a tight budget climate, breaking the costly cycle of recidivism is critical. SB 397 will encourage individuals who are incarcerated to complete educational programs, which will increase their ability to thrive in their communities upon release from incarceration.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 397.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.