

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of white folks working as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with the Out for Justice. I am a resident of MD District 11. I am testifying in **support of Senate Bill 397**.



Senate Bill 397 would increase the diminution credits awarded to someone who is incarcerated if they successfully complete a specifically enumerated educational or vocational training program.

It is well known that the criminal legal system, from policing to the courts, targets, arrests, and imprisons Black people at rates well above white people. It is especially true in Maryland, where we imprison a larger share of our young Black men than any other US state.

Having a criminal record reduces the likelihood of getting a job or callback by 50%. This is in part due to the negative social stigma associated with having a record. Additionally, thousands of Marylanders exit state and local correctional facilities and return to our communities without educational or vocational experience to support their successful reentry upon release. The effect is even more pronounced for African Americans who face the implicit and explicit bias of America today. The natural consequence of having no legal means to make a living is the necessity of making a living through alternative means, which are penalized by the criminal justice system. These barriers lead to a cycle of recidivism for individuals with experiences in the criminal legal system.

Incentivizing educational and vocational opportunities to incarcerated Marylanders gives them a better chance of attaining meaningful occupational credentials that can strengthen their resumes and allow them a greater chance of success at finding gainful employment upon reentry, thus reducing the risk of recidivism. This reduces costs associated with incarceration and provides a more skilled workforce for local employers. Most importantly, it improves the lives of our fellow Marylanders.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 397**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Benjamin Fertig
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore