



POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: SB0397 Correctional Services - Diminution Credits - Education
POSITION: SUPPORT
DATE: February 8, 2021

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 397.

Senate Bill 397 would award an additional 90 diminution credits to individuals in Maryland correctional facilities and reduce their term of confinement by successfully obtaining a certain educational certificate, diploma or degree. This bill is consistent with nationwide efforts and ongoing efforts here in Maryland to ensure meaningful and impactful criminal justice reform. Specifically, this bill would expand greatly needed opportunities for incarcerated individuals to obtain good time credits, which in turn helps to reduce prison populations and costs, and public safety within correctional facilities, and further incentivizes and supports individuals' success upon release.

Numerous studies have shown that increasing education and educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals has a direct impact on reducing recidivism. For instance, one such study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice found that individuals who participated in correctional education programs had a 43 percent lower rate of recidivism than those who did not, and further that those same individuals improved their chances of employment after release by at least 13 percent.¹ In addition to these rehabilitative benefits, it is reported that for "every dollar invested in prison education programs saves taxpayers, on average, between \$4 and \$5 in three-year incarceration costs."² This bill helps lead Maryland in a positive direction with necessary legislative reform aligned with other states across the country recognizing and receiving the benefits associated with enhanced educational attainment for incarcerated individuals.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender strongly urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 397.

¹ Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education, A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults (2013)

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html

² Lois M. Davis, Higher Education Programs in Prison, What We Know Now and What We Should Focus on Going Forward (August 2019)

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE300/PE342/RAND_PE342.pdf