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DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Economic Matters Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

**Testimony of Delegate Marlon Amprey in Support of House Bill 92 Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Our state and nation face a crisis in the growing numbers of incarcerated individuals. The available talent shortage threatens to hinder our economic growth. Public safety issues around recidivism are directly connected to our inability to support and rehabilitate the incarcerated holistically. House Bill 92 addresses our inequitable system by utilizing an all-hands-on-deck approach to improve rehabilitation.

Eighty-three percent of state prisoners released nationwide are rearrested within nine years following their release<sup>1</sup>, twenty-seven percent of formerly incarcerated people are unemployed, and twenty-five percent are without a high school diploma, GED, or college degree.<sup>2</sup> Data shows that connecting incarcerated individuals to high-quality educational programming reduces the likelihood of recidivism and increases the likelihood of post-release employment.<sup>3</sup> The evidence is clear: inmates who participate in higher education programs while incarcerated are 28% less likely to recidivate than those who do not. It is critical for the success of inmates as well as public safety to provide inmates with the resources and education needed to rehabilitate and prevent re-incarceration in the future successfully.

Recidivism is troublesome for our communities and has a negative economic impact on the State. The economic impact of Maryland Correctional Enterprises to the State of Maryland was \$67.3 million in Fiscal Year 2020.<sup>4</sup> Quality prison programming in tandem with earned credit systems is proven to reduce re-incarceration. Thus, investing in system tracking and increasing access to federal Pell Grants will reduce long-term costs associated with sentence lengths and reduce recidivism rates. Our rates are

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, C., & Witter, B. (2020). *The master plan: My journey from life in prison to a life of purpose*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/recidivism\\_and\\_reentry/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/recidivism_and_reentry/)

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, C., & Witter, B. (2020). *The master plan: My journey from life in prison to a life of purpose*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

<sup>4</sup> <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/criminal.html>

worse than Texas, Ohio, and Florida with 40% of offenders who go to Maryland jails re-offending and going back to jail.<sup>5</sup> We must act now to prevent this number from growing.

We need HB92 to improve the inmate rehabilitation process by increasing incarcerated persons' access to higher education programs and aid in their success. HB92 will require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to assist inmates in accessing federal Pell Grants by consulting with higher education institutions in Maryland. Additionally, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Education, and the Department of Human Services will be required to work together to set goals for the number of inmates in education programs and establish a tracking system.

**For these reasons, I urge you to vote favorably on HB 92.**

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marlon Amprey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Delegate Marlon Amprey  
40<sup>th</sup> Legislative District of Maryland