



Appropriations Committee
Testimony on HB0092, Resources and Education for all Prisoners (REAP) Act
January 18, 2024
SUPPORT
Andrea Cantora, University of Baltimore

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I, Andrea Cantora, am testifying in support of HB0092, Resources and Education for all Prisoners (REAP) Act. I am submitting this testimony as a faculty member in the School of Criminal Justice at the University of Baltimore, and as the Director of our Second Chance College Program.

This Act would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to establish goals for the number of incarcerated people in rehabilitation programs, will establish a tracking system of individuals progress in programs, will require the Governor to annually appropriate funds to DPSCS for the use of marketing education programs and tracking systems of such programs, and will require DPSCS to assist incarcerated people with accessing federal education grants.

Since 2016 our University has provided college courses to incarcerated men through the U.S. Department of Education's Second Chance Pell Grant Experimental Sites Initiative. Our program is being offered at Jessup Correctional Institution (JCI). We have served over 100 men, with approximately 50 enrolled each semester. Many of our students who started their college education at JCI are now enrolled in courses on our campus. We are committed to helping these students complete their college degree – whether it be while they are still in prison or when released.

As a higher education institution that already provides educational programming inside Maryland prisons, I support the expansion of systems to ensure people in prison receive adequate services. Historically, such education programs in prison have been underfunded. With the restoration of Pell Grants for incarcerated people, more men and women in Maryland prisons will have opportunities to enroll in college. This bill will allow for the use of state funds to expand tracking systems of those enrolled in educational programs. With the implementation of tracking systems, the DPSCS and MHEC can develop strategies to therefore increase access to college programming in prison. Expanding access to educational programs will help to improve the educational and life outcomes of the incarcerated men and women in Maryland's prisons.

The intention of House Bill 92 would potentially increase the number of people who participate in prison education programs and indirectly will impact public safety. Many studies find that correctional education participation leads to reductions in recidivism, increased employment, higher earnings, and other benefits. The most recent study by RAND found that prisoners who participated in correctional education programs had a 43 percent lower rate of recidivism than those who did not participate. Additionally, those who participate in correctional

education had a 13 percent higher chance of obtaining employment.¹ Participation in prison college programs also improves self-esteem levels, makes the prison environment safer, and motivates people to continue education once released.²

For these reasons, I encourage you to vote **favorably** on the **Resources and Education for all Prisoners (REAP) Act HB0092**.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Andrea Cantora, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, School of Criminal Justice

Director of Second Change College Program

¹ Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. N. V. (2013). *Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional education: A Meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults*. The RAND Corporation.

² Winterfield, L., Coggeshall, M., Burke-Storer, M., Correa, V. & Tidd, S. (2009). *The Effects of Postsecondary Correctional Education*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center.