

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 194

TO: Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor)
DATE: February 5, 2026
BILL: Incarcerated Job Training Act

MD LABOR POSITION: INFORMATION

HB194 would establish the Incarcerated Individual Apprenticeship Program in the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor)'s Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) is the State Apprenticeship Agency and oversees Registered Apprenticeship (RA) in Maryland. All RA programs are approved by DWDAL/the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council (MATC).

MD Labor encourages RA as a job training method and is always seeking ways to grow this strategy, particularly for Marylanders that face barriers to employment like Incarcerated Individuals (IIs). However, MD Labor would like to flag the following items for the Committee that do not comport with RAs.

The bill has several provisions that would implement practices that are nonstandard for apprenticeship programs. Registered Apprentices are paid in a progression of payment structure that is based on the end journeyworker wage for that occupation; this incentivizes participants to stay in the program because their hourly wages increase as their skills increase. HB194 only stipulates that apprentices must be paid "not less than the State minimum wage," which is often less than the amounts in these progressive payment structures. Additionally, HB194 would require the employer to pay the employee's wages to DPSCS, rather than directly to the employee. Registered Apprentices are paid directly, an incentive for them to remain engaged with the program.

HB194 also does not specify that the apprenticeships, as outlined in the bill, must be *Registered* Apprenticeships. RAs are vetted programs where apprentices begin work on day one of their participation. MD Labor and MATC provide oversight of these programs to ensure participants are properly trained, mentored, and compensated. The Department is aware of other instances where a program is called "apprenticeship" without having gone through the full registration process to align with industry standards, appropriate safeguards for workers, etc.

MD Labor encourages new ideas about apprenticeship and job training for IIs; however, the Department has the above outlined concerns with the program proposed in this legislation.

The Department respectfully requests the Committee consider this information on HB194. For questions, please contact Andrew Fulginiti at Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov.