

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 783

(Senator Rosapepe)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Appropriations

**Correctional Education Council - Adult Correctional Institutions - Study of
Access to the Internet and Higher Education Courses (Raising Education
Attainment)**

This bill requires the Correctional Education Council (CEC) to convene two separate stakeholder workgroups – to address issues related to the availability of Internet access in State correctional institutions and the availability of higher education courses for inmates – in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission, respectively. The council must report its findings to specified committees of the General Assembly by December 1, 2016.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The council can convene the workgroups and report its findings with existing budgeted resources. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: CEC is under the joint jurisdiction of the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR) and DPSCS. The 14-member council must develop and recommend educational and workforce training programs for each correctional institution

in the Division of Correction within DPSCS. It is charged with adopting regulations for the implementation of mandatory education and workforce training programs for specified categories of inmates. CEC must report on each inmate's progress in the programs to the Parole Commission and carry out specified reporting and advocacy requirements related to the programs.

Background: According to CEC's 2015 annual report, the 23,000 inmates in Maryland correctional institutions read, on average, at between the fifth and eighth grade reading levels, and fewer than half do not have a high school diploma when they enter. On average, 3,300 inmates are served each day by correctional educational programs, with about 12,000 receiving services each year. The fiscal 2017 State operating budget includes \$19.6 million for correctional education programs in adult facilities.

Three correctional institutions (Maryland Correctional Training Center, Jessup Correctional Institution, and Eastern Correctional Institution) piloted a self-pay college program launched in fiscal 2015. Each institution partnered with a community college to offer a certificate program (Desktop User Specialist at Hagerstown Community College, Business Support Specialist at Anne Arundel Community College, and Small Business Management Option at Wor-Wic Community College) leading to an Associate's in Arts degree. Inmates pay tuition and fees directly to the community college to participate in the classes. DLLR advises that Hagerstown and Wor-Wic will likely end their programs at the conclusion of the current academic year due to lack of enrollment. In addition, Goucher College, through a private grant, offers courses at two institutions (Maryland Correctional Institution-Jessup and Maryland Correctional Institution for Women) that may be applied to a Bachelor's of Science degree. Just over 100 students completed individual courses at the two facilities combined.

DLLR advises that Internet connectivity is limited in correctional facilities for security reasons. As examinations for GEDs and ASE certification for auto mechanics are now administered exclusively online, accommodations have had to be made for some inmates. Any expansion of Internet access would require additional resources and must be consistent with Division of Correction policies and restrictions. Secure space for Internet-connected computers in some correctional facilities may be limited too.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission; Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Michael C. Rubenstein

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510