

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised
 (Senator Carter)

Senate Bill 623
 Finance

Judiciary

Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission

This bill establishes the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission, staffed by the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP). The commission must (1) convene an advisory stakeholder group, as specified; (2) work with the advisory stakeholder group, including conducting roundtable discussion forums seeking public input in all geographic regions of the State; (3) develop an education-focused statewide framework of policies to invest in strategies to increase public safety and reduce recidivism of adult offenders, using a data-driven approach; (4) research best practices for the primary, secondary, postsecondary, and career or vocational education of those who are subject to the criminal and juvenile justice systems; (5) identify measures to mitigate risk factors that contribute to adult contact with the criminal justice system, with a focus on education; (6) evaluate current workforce programs and their effectiveness, as specified; and (7) request technical assistance from specified organizations. Members may not receive compensation. The commission must submit an interim report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by June 1, 2025; a final report is due by January 1, 2026. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2024, and terminates June 30, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2024. General fund expenditures increase by \$144,000 in FY 2025 and \$73,800 in FY 2026 for contractual staff. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	144,000	73,800	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$144,000)	(\$73,800)	\$0	\$0	\$0

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Correctional Education Council

The Correctional Education Council is under the joint jurisdiction of the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. The council must develop and recommend an educational and workforce training program for adult correctional institutions in the State. These programs must meet the special needs and circumstances of the inmates in each correctional institution.

The Correctional Education Council must also adopt regulations for a mandatory education program for inmates who fail to attain specified minimum educational standards as well as regulations for a mandatory workforce skills training program. Further, the council must advocate and promote the interests of educational programs and workforce skills training opportunities in correctional institutions and regularly review these programs to ensure that educational and training needs of inmates are being met.

Workforce Development and Adult Learning

MDL's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) oversees Correctional Education throughout Maryland's State correctional facilities. DWDAL's Office of Correctional Education provides career training opportunities "behind the fence." Offerings vary by institution but include training in automotive skills, barbering, construction, and welding. All occupational courses lead to a portable, industry-recognized credential that contributes to an inmate's employability after release. In addition to occupational programming, the Office of Correctional Education oversees academic and transitional courses throughout Maryland's prisons. Academic programming includes GED preparation ahead of earning a Maryland high school diploma and English as a second language courses. Prior to release, inmates may complete transitional courses to ease their reentrance to society. These offerings include classes in parenting, employment readiness, financial literacy, and life skills.

Chapter 485 of 2022, the Maryland New Start Act of 2022, established the New Start Grant Program in MDL to award grants to at least five eligible organizations to create or support existing entrepreneurship development programs that assist specified formerly imprisoned individuals or specified individuals approved for release by a correctional facility. The Act also authorized the Department of Commerce, in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs, to administer a microloan program to award collateral-free loans to these formerly or currently imprisoned individuals. The Governor must include an appropriation of at least \$300,000 to the Maryland New Start

Microloan Fund and at least \$200,000 for the Maryland New Start Grant Program in the annual budget bill through fiscal 2028.

MDL provides services to returning citizens through the Re-entry Navigator initiative. Re-entry Navigators are a team of employment specialists located within the American Job Centers across the State of Maryland who connect justice-involved job seekers with businesses by planning with pre-release individuals and supporting post-release job seekers. The navigators also continually establish a network of employer contacts who are interested in hiring their clients. More information on the Re-entry Navigator Program can be found on MDL's [website](#).

State Expenditures: Despite the bill's June 1, 2024 effective date, it is assumed that State finances are not affected in fiscal 2024.

Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

Existing staff within GOCPP cannot handle the additional workload generated by the bill. Accordingly, general fund expenditures increase by \$143,965 in fiscal 2025, which reflects a 30-day start-up delay from the bill's June 1, 2024 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one contractual program coordinator and one contractual research analyst to coordinate with the advisory stakeholder group and technical assistance entities and to conduct research necessary to complete the required reports. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, travel costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Positions	2.0
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$127,913
Operating Expenses and Travel Costs	<u>16,052</u>
Total FY 2025 State Expenditures	\$143,965

Future year expenditures reflect annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses, including travel costs. The contractual positions are assumed to terminate during fiscal 2026, shortly after the commission's final report is due.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State's implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Maryland Department of Labor

The commission created by the bill and the existing Correctional Education Council have some duplicative functions; thus, MDL staff may be operationally affected as MDL is required to participate in both commissions.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 209 (Delegate Amprey) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 28, 2024
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