

Department of Legislative Services
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FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 612 (Delegate Pasteur, *et al.*)
 Government, Labor, and Elections

Correctional Education and Workforce Skills Training Programs - State
 Correctional Ombudsman and Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training
 Program for Incarcerated Individuals

This bill codifies the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training Program for Incarcerated Individuals in the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to expand the use of certified peer recovery specialist (CPRS) training in correctional institutions as specified. MD Labor must administer the program in consultation with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), the Maryland Department of Health, and the Maryland Office of Overdose Response (MOOR). MD Labor must create at least one position to provide correctional education staff for the program and at least one position to provide support to CPRSs. Beginning fiscal 2028, the Governor may include an appropriation sufficient for the operation and administration of the program in the annual operating budget. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$332,200 in FY 2028 (1) for two program staff at MD Labor as specified in the bill and (2) to enhance CPRS wages for incarcerated individuals and expand professional development resources. The State Correctional Ombudsman can provide consultation as specified with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	332,200	327,100	336,100	345,200
Net Effect	\$0	(\$332,200)	(\$327,100)	(\$336,100)	(\$345,200)

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Under the bill “certified peer recovery specialist” includes an individual who has been certified for the purpose of providing peer support services, defined as a set of nonclinical activities provided by individuals in recovery from mental disorders, substance-related disorders, or addictive disorders who use their personal, lived experiences and training to support other individuals with mental disorders, substance-related disorders, or addictive disorders.

The purposes of the program are to (1) provide funds to establish and maintain CPRS training for incarcerated individuals; (2) provide compensation for incarcerated individuals who participate in CPRS training; and (3) prepare incarcerated individuals who participate in CPRS training for postrelease employment in behavioral health and community recovery services.

MD Labor must create at least one position for the program to provide support to the CPRSs and at least one position to provide correctional education staff for the program to (1) provide direct support to CPRS trainees; (2) facilitate communication between correctional education schools and the CPRS supervisor; and (3) assist with training, data management, and consistent program delivery across correctional institutions.

MD Labor must use funds appropriated in the budget to support the positions required by the bill and provide professional development resources, including continuing education, cross-trainings, and peer supervision workshops. DPSCS must use funds appropriated in the budget for the program to enhance the daily wage for incarcerated individuals who provide CPRS services and provide professional development resources, including continuing education, cross-trainings, and peer supervision workshops.

The bill also requires the Director of Education and Workforce Skills Training for Correctional Institutions to consult with the State Correctional Ombudsmen about the operation of education and workforce skills training programs in adult correctional institutions.

Current Law:

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Program

MD Labor advises that its Office of Correctional Education (OCE) already administers a CPRS program, funded through grants from MOOR with funds from the Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF). The program is implemented in partnership with DPSCS and the Maryland Addiction and Behavioral-Health Professionals Certification Board. The program operates in 11 correctional education institutions statewide. The program provides an

industry-recognized credential pathway aligned with State certification standards. The program is designed to support workforce readiness, recovery-oriented skill development, and reentry preparation, with outcomes measured through participant enrollment, training completion, and certification exam participation and pass rates.

Correctional Education Council

The Correctional Education Council is under the joint jurisdiction of MD Labor and the DPSCS. 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

MD Labor's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) oversees Correctional Education throughout Maryland's State correctional facilities. DWDAL's OCE 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 incarcerated individual's employability after release. In addition to occupational programming, OCE oversees academic and transitional courses throughout Maryland's correctional facilities. Academic programming includes GED preparation ahead of earning a Maryland high school diploma and English as a second language courses. Prior to release, incarcerated individuals may complete transitional courses to ease their reentrance to society. These offerings include classes in parenting, employment readiness, financial literacy, and life skills.

MD Labor 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 who connect justice-involved job seekers with businesses by planning with prerelease 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 Initiative can be found on MD Labor's [website](#).

Workgroup on the Reimbursement of Certified Peer Recovery Specialists

Chapters 323 and 324 of 2018 required the Secretary of Health to convene a stakeholder workgroup to make findings and recommendations on issues related to the reimbursement of CPRSs. The workgroup submitted its [final report](#) in November 2018 with 11 recommendations on issues related to the reimbursement of CPRS.

Opioid Restitution Fund

Chapter 537 of 2019 established ORF, a special fund to retain revenues received by the State relating to specified opioid judgments or settlements, which may be used only for opioid-related programs and services.

Through the end of fiscal 2025, Maryland has received more than \$245.8 million from opioid settlements. By October 2038, the State is projected to receive more than \$670.8 million in opioid settlement revenue, which is split between local jurisdictions and ORF.

State Expenditures: MD Labor advises that its current CPRS program is funded through competitive grants from MOOR using funds from ORF. The total award amount for the most recent cycle (July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026) is \$131,287. Of the existing grant, \$56,000 is used for a contractual program manager and an additional \$75,287 is used to support program activities, which are similar to those outlined for the program in the bill. However, the grant is an ongoing competitive grant and funding for the CPRS program is not guaranteed beyond the current grant period. This analysis therefore assumes that existing grant funding is not renewed beginning in fiscal 2028 and that general funds are needed to maintain and enhance the existing program.

Program Enhancement

DPSCS advises that there are additional costs to increase daily wages for incarcerated individuals in the program (currently set at \$1.14 per day for CPRS trainees and \$2.00 per day for certified CPRSs). Additionally, DPSCS advises that there are costs to expand professional development resources in the form of additional continuing education courses, cross-training, and peer supervision workshops. In total, DPSCS estimates that the additional costs could total \$127,314, a \$52,027 increase over the current \$75,287 level of funding for services that MD Labor advises the program is providing. DPSCS's estimate reflects the cost to (1) enhance wages by \$0.24 per day for incarcerated individuals in training and \$0.40 for certified CPRSs and (2) provide additional professional development resources, including continuing education, cross-training, and peer supervision workshops as required by the bill.

Program Staffing

In addition to the programming costs described above, general fund expenditures increase for staff at MD Labor required by the bill. Thus, general fund expenditures increase by \$204,924 beginning in fiscal 2028, which reflects the cost of hiring the two required program administrators described above. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Positions	2.0
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$185,199
Other Operating Expenses	<u>19,725</u>
Total FY 2028 State Expenditures	\$204,924

Future year expenditures reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

In total, general fund expenditures increase by \$332,238 in fiscal 2028, of which \$204,924 is for staffing and \$127,314 is for enhanced programmatic costs.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Budget and Management; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Office of the Correctional Ombudsman; Maryland Department of Health; Maryland Department of Labor; Maryland’s Office of Overdose Response; Department of Legislative Services

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