

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 767

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 767 To: Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Chairman

From: William Freeman III, Goucher College Sociology/Anthropology Senior, P2P Program Coordinator.

February 22, 2020

Dear Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Members:

My name is William Freeman III. I served nearly 21 years in prison. At that time I enrolled in Goucher Prison Education Partnership (GPEP). Amy Roza, who is GPEP's Executive Director, said, "This is an opportunity to make education meaningful to you." I sat there replaying those words over and over again in my head like a broken record. Although I swelled full with doubt and distrust for institutions, I endeavored to take her on her words. I earned approximately 73 credits before being Judge Charles Peters modified my sentence, whereby he released me in confidence that I would seek to effect change in some young person's life.

Goucher College allowed me to enroll onto its main campus, where I expect to graduate May 22, 2020. I am a nontraditional college student inspiring others in ways even I fail to understand. If Goucher College had not decided to carry an education into Maryland Correctional Institution Jessup (MCI-J) my life would be different considering because I am a felony.

Education altered my thinking and grounded my pedagogy in strategies that will allow me to rebuild the community I helped destroy. I currently work with From Prison Cells to PhD as a Program Coordinator assisting other directly impacted people pursue higher education. In addition, I am the Research Committee Lead at Out For Justice--a nonprofit organization advocating at the state level on behalf of directly impacted community members to effect policy change. The work I do gives me purpose.

I support Senate Bill#767 because I like others deserve to be considered upon the merits of GPA, testing scores, or simply my willingness to learn and do better. Asking people to check the box is asking them to relegate themselves out onto and beyond the fringes of citizenship in a world of inescapable degradation. Crime is a symptom because systems continue to obstruct people's ability to be in common or like everyone else. I support Senate Bill #767, and I respectfully urge this committee to render a favorable report.

William Freeman  
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