



## Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

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**BILL: SENATE BILL 70**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

**EXPLANATION:** Senate Bill 70 proposes to alter the minimum number of calendar days the Correctional Education Council must require certain inmates in correctional institutions to participate in a certain mandatory education program.

### **COMMENTS:**

- The Department's Division of Correction (DOC) operates approximately 17 State correctional facilities, which house offenders sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also runs the Baltimore City Jail, which houses pretrial detainees and inmates sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and less.
- SB 70 proposes to increase the number of mandatory calendar days an inmate must participate in correctional education from 120 to 240 days, which will hopefully lead to an increase in the number of GEDs awarded to the incarcerated population.
- Education has been linked to lower recidivism rates. A 2013 report from Rand Corporation determined "inmates that participate in academic and occupational training programs are 43 percent less likely to return to prison."<sup>i</sup>
- More GEDs mean more secondary education, vocational, and work opportunities while incarcerated. The DOC has partnered with a number of higher education institutions, offering college classes. Increasing the number of GEDs earned each year will hopefully increase participating in college courses.
- Programs operated by Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) and the Department of Labor require inmates to have a GED (or high school diploma) to be eligible to accept a job or participate in occupational or vocational training. Increasing the minimum number of calendar days inmates are required to participate in educational classes will result in an increase in the number of GEDs issued each year, an increase in the candidate pool for skilled position opportunities.

- More importantly, GED and/or industry certification allows the inmate to return to the community with increased knowledge and skills and will assist the offender with maintaining sustainability in the community, thus lowering recidivism rates.

**CONCLUSION:** The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services urges a **FAVORABLE** committee report on Senate Bill 70.

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<sup>i</sup> RAND Corporation. (2013, August 22). *Education and Vocational Training in Prisons Reduces Recidivism, Improves Job Outlook*. Retrieved from: <http://www.rand.org/news/press/2013/08/22.html>