

SB-858/HB-1524

Procurement and Correctional Facilities
Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
("Returned Citizen Job Opportunity Bill")
FAVORABLE

February 25, 2020

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee:

The Vera Institute of Justice documented Maryland's prison population for 2018 as 17, 815 of which approximately 70% of Maryland's incarcerated individuals are African American. In 2018, it was noted that Maryland releases on average approximately 1, 600 inmates per year. Unemployment among returned citizens averages 37% which directly impacts recidivism.

Coppin State University, a Historically Black Institution, serves a multi-generational student population and provides education opportunities while promoting lifelong learning. The University fosters leadership, social responsibility, civic and community engagement, cultural diversity and inclusion, and economic development. CSU is committed to fostering our mission through education, scholarship, and service.

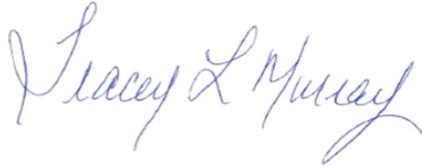
Coppin offers 53 academic programs: 32 baccalaureate, 11 masters, and 9 certificates programs, and one doctorate degree. CSU is uniquely positioned to enter the prisons with faculty who are well equipped to provide educational access in the development of successful completers of degree programs or certificates. Our faculty are committed to teaching onsite in the prisons using active teaching strategies and culturally relevant methods. CSU plans to further explore how to link educational access and the Second Chance Pell Grant Program in the preparation of incarcerated individuals who are ready for work and possess competitive skill sets.

As an educational leader in Baltimore, the institution prepares its students to be competitive through its commitment to quality, accessible, and affordable educational opportunities. For example, Coppin State University, College of Health Professions, School of Allied Health offers a Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences. Incarcerated individuals could be work ready to meet the healthcare workforce needs associated with the increase in healthcare education through course work which fosters their knowledge about community-based educational outreach, nutritional sciences, plant-based nutrition, cardiovascular health, and environmental health sciences. Therefore, a formerly incarcerated individual could be considered qualified for a community health worker position and be considered for employment.

In addition to the educational opportunities to complete a certificate or a degree program, the incarcerated individuals who become “Returned Citizens” can learn more about healthy food options and lifestyle management. Thus, the “Returned Citizens” would be healthier when they return, and they also will be "up to date" on the health trends in their community. Therefore, they would have a supported return and transition making "re-entry" easier since they have current knowledge about their health, have a pathway to employment, and options for how to better associate within the community with an overall goal to improve re-entry outcomes.

CSU plans to further explore how to best serve the academic needs of incarcerated individuals to make the outcomes of the “Returned Citizens Job Opportunity Bill” a measurable success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tracey L. Murray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracey L. Murray, DNP, CRNP, FNP-BC
Dean and Professor
Director of the Health Centers