



## Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

### Office of the Secretary

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**BILL:** **SENATE BILL 800**

**POSITION:** **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

**EXPLANATION:** This bill will establish an Inmate Training and Job Pilot Program at four universities of higher education. The Pilot program is to be administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission for the purpose of providing educational and vocational training opportunities for an inmate in the 9 months preceding the inmate's date of release.

### COMMENTS:

- The Department's Division of Correction (DOC) operates approximately 17 State correctional facilities that house offenders sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also runs the Baltimore City Pretrial Complex which houses pretrial detainees and inmates sentenced to incarceration for 18 months and less.
- SB 800 provides that the Maryland Higher Education Commission shall administer an Inmate Training and Job Pilot Program at Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Morgan State University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore for the purpose of providing educational and vocational training opportunities for an inmate in the 9 months preceding the inmate's date of release.
- The Department of Labor currently provides correctional educational opportunities to inmates through programs offered at each State correctional institution. The mission is to provide incarcerated individuals with educational and workforce development opportunities that facilitates a successful transition into community.
- The Department recognizes the value of education and has demonstrated success in partnering with colleges and universities to provide continued education to incarcerated individuals.
- The Second Chance Pell Program supports postsecondary education programs for individuals in prison and affords inmates the opportunity to receive higher education certificates and degrees. The Department already has partnerships with four of Maryland's higher education institutions who were awarded the Second Chance Pell Grant: Goucher College; Anne

Arundel Community College; Wor-Wic Community College; and the University of Baltimore. With the recent expansion of the Second Chance Pell Program, the DOC is growing partnerships with more colleges throughout the State, including the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Bowie State University.

- SB800 will require that classes be provided on a virtual platform. The Department already has a limited tablet pilot program with the Department of Labor. The tablet pilot program only includes material taught by the Department of Labor's Correctional Education program and not higher education material. Since state correctional facilities have thick concrete walls and are often decades old, outfitting them with wifi and internet connectivity is extremely challenging. It took the Department a notable amount of time and effort in order to equip the facilities selected to participate in the Department of Labor's tablet pilot program. The Department anticipates similar challenges in implementing SB 800.
- **CONCLUSION:** For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates Senate Bill 800.