

UMDSGA_FAV_SB403.pdf

Uploaded by: Alpert, Dan

Position: FAV

The University of Maryland Student Government Association

Testimony for SB403

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021

Public Institutions of Higher Education - Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals - Academic and Employment Opportunities

POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Dan Alpert and I am the Student Body President at the University of Maryland, College Park. I'd like to start by thanking Chair Pinsky and all the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this important bill, as well as Senator Carter for introducing this legislation, which will improve access to employment and academic opportunities at Maryland's institutions of higher education for those who are currently and formerly incarcerated.

In the state of Maryland, all state agencies are required to buy furniture from the Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE). The University System of Maryland accounts for nearly 20% of the MCE's annual sales, which were more than \$50 million in fiscal year 2019. At the same time, incarcerated people employed by the MCE make substantially less than the state's minimum wage. MCE employee salaries range from \$0.17 to \$1.16 an hour. At most, this is less than \$10 per day¹. The fact that MCE workers are underpaid means that we have taken advantage of their labor during their period of incarceration. This is not only economically problematic, but also has a disproportionately negative impact on Black Marylanders. Maryland incarcerates Black people at a higher rate than any other state in the country. Seventy percent of the state's prison population is Black, more than twice the national average, and more than twice the percentage of Black individuals in the state at large².

To remedy this disparity, this legislation proposes that a process be established specifically for formerly incarcerated individuals to apply for jobs at, and admission to, public colleges and universities in the state. Included in this process is a requirement for outreach and assistance on the part of universities so that formerly incarcerated people can put forward their best application possible. While we believe that the current state of the prison employment system is unfair from a racial and economic perspective, we also understand its necessity and the positive opportunities it may provide towards reducing recidivism. Instead of terminating the relationship between Maryland higher education and the MCE, this will build a new relationship, one where formerly incarcerated people who worked for the MCE are welcomed to our institutions of higher education and given unique opportunities to succeed.

This legislation draws inspiration from universities across the country, including public institutions like Ohio University³ and UNC-Chapel Hill⁴, that offer specifically tailored programs for incarcerated people to earn a college degree, and from Georgetown University⁵, where the descendants of slaves once owned by the university are offered preferential admission. With a process that is catered to their unique needs, we believe that those who are released from incarceration will have greater opportunity in reentering the workforce and society. We recognize that a program as novel as this will require a lot of work, but the services it provides will truly make a difference, and for these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to issue a favorable report for Senate Bill 403.

Sincerely,

Dan Alpert, *Student Body President*

Ben Baitman, *Director of Government Affairs*

¹ [MCE FY 2019 Report](#)

² [Report: Proportion of Maryland black prison population is more than double the national average of 32%](#)

³ [Ohio University Correctional Education](#)

⁴ [Correctional Education – UNC-Chapel Hill Friday Center](#)

⁵ [Descendants | Office of Undergraduate Admissions | Georgetown University](#)

MaryPIRG Students SB403 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Anand, Greeshma

Position: FAV

MaryPIRG Students strongly urges representatives in the Maryland General Assembly to vote YES on SB403, which will require the Maryland Higher Education Commission and Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) to provide easier access to academic and employment opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. The current system in place poses great barriers for individuals who are in or have gone through the MCE. These barriers make the smooth transition from incarceration to civilian life oftentimes impossible to achieve. This can be seen by the high recidivism rates formerly incarcerated people face.

Those who are currently or formerly incarcerated are people who deserve the right to an easy transition into civilian life after leaving the MCE. They should be provided an avenue to attain a high quality education and job, which this bill supports. Being incarcerated should not be an impediment to one's future. This bill would support a rehabilitative system so that formerly incarcerated individuals have the opportunity to build a more sustainable life for themselves and their families.

Through SB403, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, who were employed by the MCE, will have increased access to academic and employment opportunities. The passing of this bill will allow for these individuals to work towards a smooth transition back to civilian life. For these reasons, MaryPIRG Students urges you to vote yes on this bill.

Sincerely,

Greeshma Anand, Board Chair of MaryPIRG Students

Bailey Arenberg, Vice President of MaryPIRG Students

Ayanna Chambers, Secretary and Visibility Chair of MaryPIRG Students

Donald Vogel, Recruitment Chair of MaryPIRG Students

Carrington 2021 SB403 Public Institutions of High

Uploaded by: Carrington, Darrell

Position: FAV



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“Continuing A Tradition of Excellence”

SB 403 – Public Institutions of Higher Education - Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals - Academic and Employment Opportunities - SUPPORT

Carrington & Associates, LLC SUPPORTS SB403. This bill requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission, in consultation with public institutions of higher education and Maryland Correctional Enterprises, to establish a process to increase access to academic and employment opportunities at public institutions of higher education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals who are or were employed by Maryland Correctional Enterprises during their incarceration.

We would like to thank Senator Jill Carter for introducing this legislation and her steadfast commitment to civil rights for all citizens, especially those from historically disadvantage areas of our state. This straightforward legislation is about providing information and opportunity for a number of returning citizens that have spent time during their period of confinement working for an enterprise that they reaped very little financial reward. If considered an “apprenticeship” of sorts, then these individuals should be given a fair shot, with a more even playing field, at placement in our institutions of higher education and/or employment at a public institution. These returning citizens have already been working, some for many years, servicing state and local governments, as well as non-profit organizations and, with under certain conditions, private industry. Many question if the history and use of correctional industries in Maryland, which dates back to the 19th century, needs to be revisited.

For these reasons, Carrington & Associates, LLC enthusiastically **SUPPORTS SB403** and asks for your **FAVORABLE** report.

Carrington 2021 SB403 Public Institutions of Highe

Uploaded by: Carrington, Darrell

Position: FAV



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Testimony_JPC_SB0403.pdf

Uploaded by: Carter, Jill

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0403 - Public Institutions of Higher Education
– Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals –
Academic and Employment Opportunities
Before the Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
Committee
on February 25, 2021**

**Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice chair, and Members of the
Committee:**

This bill seeks to help formerly incarcerated individuals during the reentry process by creating increased opportunities for them in accessing academic programs and employment at the University System of Maryland (USM).

The impetus of this Bill is worth mentioning. Students at the University of Maryland discovered the relationship between incarcerated individuals and themselves - that being the actual chairs they sit in during classes. As you are aware, Maryland Correctional Enterprises supply, among many other things, furniture to USM. The students you are going

to hear from decided that the inmates who produced the furniture for their education should have access to the same opportunities they have themselves.

This Bill has three major components. First, it would direct the Maryland Higher Education Commission to conduct outreach and information campaigns to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals in order to inform them of the employment and education opportunities available at USM. Second, the commission would establish a preferential track for student applicants to USM who are or were formerly incarcerated. And third, the commission would establish a preferential track for applicants seeking employment at USM that are or were formerly incarcerated.

Maryland is a proponent of strengthening reentry programs that allow formerly incarcerated individuals to reintegrate into society upon release, and this is another initiative we can introduce to prioritize our investment in reentry programs. This bill allows for greater access to education and employment, and emphasizes the sharing of information about these opportunities.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on SB 403 from this committee.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "P" and "C".

Jill P. Carter

SB403 MCE Testimony 2_25 (PRP) .pdf

Uploaded by: Jamiluddin, Aaisha

Position: FAV

Hello, my name is Aisha Jamiluddin and I am a student at the University of Maryland. I'm here representing the Prison Resistance Project, a student activist organization that advocates for prison abolition and works to combat injustices in the criminal legal system. I'd like to thank Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and all the members of the committee for allowing me the chance to speak today. I'd also like to thank Senator Carter for sponsoring this legislation, which will give admissions help and preferential admissions to formerly incarcerated MCE workers and help them get jobs with the university system.

Incarcerated workers of MCE are paid a fraction of the state minimum wage, and the University of Maryland has been one of the primary beneficiaries of their exploited labor. As students, we've known for years that our chairs, desks, and tables are created through prison labor. Yet despite relying on their labor, we do nothing to support these workers. MCE workers usually leave prison with no job prospects, no education, and no savings.

Those released from prison already face discrimination in the work-force, and incarceration makes it difficult for individuals to receive a college education. Many incarcerated people come home to poverty with little opportunities for a stable future. In 2017, only 1 percent of the U.S. prison population had a bachelors or graduate degree. Over half of the people recently returning from prison are unemployed. This majorly contributes to their likelihood of being reincarcerated. As of 2018, 40% of returning citizens to Maryland are rearrested within 3 years. In 2015, it was reported that 73% of citizens returning to Baltimore City reoffend within 3 years after their release.

We also must remember that over 70% percent of Maryland's prison population is Black, compared to 31% percent of the state. There is no question that our prisons systematically oppress and exploit Black people for their labor, while robbing them of future stability. Through this bill, our University system can allow for formerly incarcerated people to attain some stability once they're released from prison. This will not only contribute to their wellbeing, but the wellbeing of their families and communities. This is the very least that we can do.

And while we strongly support this bill, we want to recognize that there should be programs like this for all incarcerated people, whether or not they have worked for MCE. We also must recognize that this bill primarily benefits those who are released from prison, while little is done for those still incarcerated. If we wish to end our state's and our country's commitment to mass incarceration, we need to recognize the humanity of those within prisons and work to substantially decrease the prison population.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to give a favorable report to this piece of legislation. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Aisha Jamiluddin, *Prison Resistance Project*

SB0403_MACC_FAV_B.Sadusky.pdf

Uploaded by: Sadusky, Dr. Bernard

Position: FAV



SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

February 25, 2021

TESTIMONY

**Submitted by
Dr. Bernard Sadusky, Executive Director
Maryland Association of Community Colleges**

**SB0403 – Public Institutions of Higher Education – Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated
Individuals – Academic & Employment Opportunities**

Position: Support

On behalf of Maryland's 16 community colleges, I want to thank the sponsor for introducing SB0403 that requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission in consultation with public institutions of higher education and Maryland Correctional Enterprises to provide information and outreach on postsecondary opportunities to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Postsecondary training and/or degree credentials are needed in almost all employment that leads to living wages. Incarcerated individuals often lack the knowledge on how to obtain this information. A unified outreach program designed for incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals will identify and encourage the pursuit of postsecondary opportunities. In addition, Pell grant revisions and other scholarship opportunities are now available for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals reducing the cost of pursuing postsecondary education credentials for these individuals.

MACC supports this legislation.

SB403 MCE Testimony 2_25 (NAACP) .pdf

Uploaded by: Siddiq, Zahrah

Position: FAV

NAACP UMCP

Testimony for SB403

Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021

Public Institutions of Higher Education - Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated
Individuals - Academic and Employment Opportunities

POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Zahrah Siddiq and I am president of NAACP where we work to inform youth of the problems affecting minorities and to advance the economic, education, social and political status of minorities and their harmonious cooperation with other peoples. I would like to thank Chair Pinsky and all the members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this important bill.

I am speaking to you today to express my support for SB403. It is time that we acknowledge the hypocrisy of our system and shed light upon incarcerated people's education and rights. According to the Maryland Correctional Enterprises Annual Report in 2019, incarcerated people's pay ranges from 17 to 36 cents an hour for a four to five day work week. According to the Baltimore Sun report in 2019, the Black Maryland prison population exceeded 70% in 2018, compared to the 31% in the state population. These two facts inevitably prove that the MCE is taking advantage of incarcerated and already marginalized peoples' labor.

I would like to point out that feedback given to students, staff, and elected officials from incarcerated peoples have been positive towards the MCE regarding the opportunity to work certain jobs that give them the ability to pass the time and to earn wages. Due to this fact, I believe it beneficial for us to further aid incarcerated peoples' situation in providing them education and a better opportunity to start their lives after their time has been served. Enacting this bill allows us to follow in the footsteps of other institutions that see this hypocrisy as well, such as Georgetown University, who is giving preferential admission to descendants of slaves who were sold by the university, as well as faculty, staff, and alumni.

In a state where we have the highest rate of Black people incarcerated, systemic inequality needs to be addressed. This bill takes a step towards remedying this issue, which is why I am asking you to vote yes on SB403.

Zahrah Siddiq

President of NAACP UMCP

SB403_USM_INFO_BOUGHMAN - 2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Boughman, Joann

Position: INFO



**SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 403**

**Public Institutions of Higher Education – Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals –
Academic and Employment Opportunities**

February 25, 2021

**Dr. Joann Boughman, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Letter of Information**

This bill requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission, in conjunction with institutions of higher education and the Maryland Correctional Enterprises, to develop materials and outreach to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals who are or were employed by Maryland Correctional Enterprises to increase access to admission and employment at public institutions of higher education.

The campuses of the University System of Maryland (USM) believe strongly in providing access to qualified individuals, and then supporting those students so they may complete their education successfully. It is clear that completing a postsecondary education plays a key role in social mobility and in raising many from poverty.

Institutions in the University System of Maryland do not discriminate against individuals who have been incarcerated, but granting preference in admissions runs counter to previous legislation that prevents us from asking about criminal history.

It should be noted that the University of Baltimore is already a member institution in the national Second Chance Pell pilot program which provides Pell grants to incarcerated individuals allowing them access to a program in the UB School of Criminal Justice.

There may be additional costs to the recruiting and admissions offices that will be problematic for some institutions, as those budgets have been affected by the monetary losses to the campuses during the COVID pandemic. Specifically, the professional schools at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) and the University of Baltimore (UB) would need to be exempted from the legislation, as those schools have specific admissions criteria and previously incarcerated individuals may not be able to become certified or licensed in certain professions.

Additionally, without being overly presumptive regarding the employment portion of the bill, it is safe to say that a good number of individuals who would qualify for the preference program under the bill would likely be disqualified from employment under our current policies. Therefore, we would likely need to amend the policy to carve out the program, which would have the unintended consequence of applying harsher scrutiny to individuals with convictions who were either not incarcerated or not on a work program while incarcerated.

While the USM supports the spirit of SB403, we believe that, especially at this difficult time, this legislation would put undue burdens on our already constrained budgets. We also reiterate that the aforementioned circumstances regarding UMB and employment qualifications should be considered. USM institutions will continue to pay attention to applicants who have been incarcerated, and provide individuals who have worked in the Maryland Correctional Enterprises program as much access as possible to programs appropriate for the student's interest and ability.