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Bill Number: House Bill 1337

Position: Letter of Information

Title: Inmate Training and Job Act of 2021

Committee: House Judiciary Committee

Hearing Date: March 15, 2021

Bill Summary:

House Bill 1337 would establish an Inmate Training and Job Pilot Program at Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Morgan State University, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and administered jointly between MHEC and the governing entities of each university. The purpose of the Pilot Program is to provide educational and vocational training opportunities for an inmate in the 9 months preceding the inmate's date of release.

Information:

Many Maryland universities, including the four listed explicitly in Senate Bill 800, already provide educational and vocational training opportunities to inmates. For example, The Goucher Prison Education Partnership (GPEP), a division of Goucher College, provides men and women incarcerated in Maryland with the opportunity to pursue a college education. Anne Arundel Community College supports the Success Through Education Program (STEP), which offers sentenced inmates General Education Development (GED), Preparation (Pre)-GED, Adult Basic Education, Adult Literacy and Advance Life Skills instruction. With the recent expansion of Pell Grants allowing incarcerated individuals to access federal funds, institutions like the University of Maryland Eastern Shore are preparing to provide college-level courses to inmates. The Maryland Department of Corrections works very closely with the campuses to ensure background checks are handled appropriately and work through the administrative oversight for colleges and universities to provide such educational opportunities. Similarly, the Maryland Department of Labor provides educational opportunities that facilitate a successful transition into Maryland's workforce and communities.

While MHEC can administer the Pilot Program, there may be entities in the State that can better provide specific expertise regarding the experiences of incarcerated individuals. Again, Maryland Department of Labor and Maryland Department of Corrections already provide educational programming for incarcerated individuals. MHEC is not well suited to provide the required follow-up – such as a hotline and connections with nonprofit organizations – with a previously incarcerated individual after their release, as required by the legislation; either the university or other entities would be better to provide the support needed to prevent recidivism and ensure the individual is able to continue their educational pursuits.

For further information, contact Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, at emily.dow@maryland.gov.