

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
House Bill 1337
Inmate Training and Job Act of 2021
March 15, 2021
Favorable with Amendments
Thomas Anderson
Student at The University of Baltimore

Good Afternoon Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my views regarding Senate Bill 800. My name is Thomas Anderson and I am an undergrad student at The University of Baltimore in the Merrick School of Business. I support the intent of HB1337, but request an amendment to add The University of Baltimore to the colleges listed in the bill.

I started attending The University of Baltimore while I was incarcerated at Jessup Correctional Institution. Upon release in November 2019, I enrolled in classes on campus and have been taking classes every semester since. I also work at Turnaround Tuesday as a Project Organizer. That job would not have been possible if it were not for the schooling I received from the University of Baltimore. I am also a part-time Peer Navigator for the Second Chance Program at The University of Baltimore.

I spent 22 ½ years in prison. Truth is, prior to the Second chance program that I was ill prepared to re-enter society. I know firsthand the power of an education because The University of Baltimore was able to provide me with the confidence and wherewithal needed to make a smooth transition back into society. Their intellectual, moral, and physical support needed is what sustained me throughout my transition.

The University of Baltimore has the blueprint of how to successfully educate the incarcerated and assist them with the transitioning process. The day after I came home they were right the assisting me with many of my needs: Identification, enrollment into college, social service issues, etc. Their assistance relieved me of a lot of stress and confusion.

The University of Baltimore also gave me a job as a Peer Navigator. This position enables me to assist and mentor others who are a part of the Second Change Program. I am very humbled by this opportunity because I am intimately connected to the struggle we have as returning citizens. We are able to relate to each other because I was once where they are. I'm giving back and it feels good.

In closing, I urge the committee to add The University of Baltimore to the list of public higher education institutions to be involved in the Pilot Program. They are committed and experienced in serving incarcerated students, and should be included in this new program. I urge the committee to adopt this amendment.

Thank you,

Thomas Anderson, University of Baltimore student