



**Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
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BILL: SENATE BILL 554

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: This bill will establish the Maryland New Start Pilot Program in the Department of Commerce to provide multi-year grants to organizations to create or support entrepreneurship development programs to provide assistance to formerly incarcerated individuals. The bill also establishes the Maryland New Start Pilot Program Fund, and will require the Governor to provide funding in the annual budget.

COMMENTS:

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (Department) oversees the Division of Correction which operates 13 State correctional facilities, housing offenders sentenced to periods of incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also oversees the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services which operates the Baltimore City Pretrial Complex. The Department does not oversee any other local jail or detention facility.
- The Department has Re-entry Specialists who provide assistance with a myriad of services to incarcerated individuals prior to their release, including:
 - Medicaid enrollment;
 - 30-day supply of medication prior to release;
 - Identification assistance (Motor Vehicle Administration, Social Security);
 - Housing assistance;
 - Employment & Career placement services;
 - Mediation services;

- Social Security application Social Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance; and
 - Veteran services.
- The Department of Labor (Labor) provides education, vocational training, and occupational opportunities to incarcerated individuals throughout the Department's Division of Correction. These programs are incredibly important as education and linkage to sustainable employment are key factors in reducing recidivism.
- In addition to the occupational skills learned within the Division of Correction, several incarcerated individuals already possess skills that may transfer to entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Recognizing the potential to increase entrepreneurship opportunities, Labor will begin offering entrepreneurship training courses in February 2022 at two prisons in Jessup; the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women and the Dorsey Run Correctional Facility. These courses will include such topics as business strategies and financial planning.
- The Maryland New Start Pilot Program would serve as another re-entry resource for formerly incarcerated individuals by providing them with resources to create or support entrepreneurship development programs. Unlike the Department of Commerce, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services does not have the ability to provide grants or loans to support entrepreneurship development programs.
- It is vital that local communities and businesses engage with formerly incarcerated individuals and provide the essential resources and services necessary to ensure their success in the community.

CONCLUSION: For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates Senate Bill 554.