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MAJORITY WHIP

Appropriations Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Oral Testimony of Jazz Lewis

**HB464 - Prince George's County – Prince George's County Reentry Employment Incentive Program – Funding
Before the Appropriations Committee**

Chair Barnes and Vice-Chair Chang and members of the Appropriation Committee,

I am proud to introduce House Bill 464, which will provide financial support to the Prince George's County Reentry Employment Incentive Program, over the course of 3 years from 2025 to 2028. Providing more funding for reentry programs is a necessity and will help individuals who have been impacted by the justice system, reenter society by engaging in employment opportunities, having chances to grow their skills, and participate in their community. This bill will allocate \$500,000 to the reentry program in Prince George's County matching funds allocated by the County

Improving funding for reentry programs in Prince George's County is a crucial step to addressing the needs of returning citizens after their release as there are a number of obstacles that the formerly incarcerated face when attempting to reenter society. Research from the National Institute of Justice shows that reentry programs help increase public safety, reduce recidivism, save money, and create a more seamless reentry experience for formerly incarcerated individuals. Having stable employment after reentry is a crucial step towards returning to society for the formerly incarcerated, and this bill seeks out to fund a critical program towards helping these citizens get back on their feet.

Maryland has a long history of over-incarceration, a history disproportionately impacting Marylanders of color. The disproportionate mass incarceration of Black individuals in this state's prison system which has been further exacerbated by recidivism can be mediated through an increased priority of reentry programs that can ensure that those who exit the system are less likely to reoffend in the future.

With this bill, we will be better equipped to tackle the revolving issue of recidivism. We will be better prepared to integrate the formerly incarcerated into their communities with less chance for recidivism later on and ensure that they are able to go on to lead happy and productive lives.

This kind of program is vital to an incarcerated person's success in escaping the stigma associated with their record in the justice system. Oftentimes the formerly incarcerated may find it significantly harder to obtain employment due to their prior record in the criminal justice system. We need to do better to expand those services that will help these returning citizens reenter the workforce, overcome these barriers to reentry, and return to their communities fully prepared to become contributing members of society.

Returning citizens should have the resources and the chance to reenter society following their release from a penal institution. The penal institutions does not provide enough support for the formerly incarcerated to reenter society. By funding this reentry program we will ensure we put into place the resources and tools necessary to cut down on recidivism and aid our returning citizens.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report.