

Feb. 16, 2023

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in **strong support of Maryland' "REAP" education bill (HB416)** because of its very powerful impact on supporting and improving prisoner education in Maryland. I am a professor at Loyola University who has worked as a volunteer prison educator, off and on, for some thirty years now. I have published a nationally known book based on this educational work, *The Soul Knows No Bars: Prisoners Reflect on Life, Death, and Hope*. I have had the privilege to see first-hand how transformational higher education is for those in prison. I know many men, long-termers and lifers, who have told me that education has virtually saved their lives, taught them how to live much better, and given them skills or degrees that can help make them employable upon release.

In fiscal terms, a meta-study by the Rand Corporation shows that correctional education is tremendously cost-effective, **saving some \$5 in ancillary costs for every \$1 spent**. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html The same Rand overview of shows that higher education **reduces criminal recidivism post-release by some 43%**. It thus is a **crucial public safety measure** insofar as the vast majority of incarcerated individuals are ultimately released back into society.

In fact, I noticed today in the Baltimore Sun, Dan Rodrick's column emphasizing the extreme importance of using prisons as a place for rehabilitation, not just a harsh place that warehouses and hardens individuals. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/columnists/dan-rodricks/bs-ed-rodricks-0217-bates-sentencing-20230216-hrgibu7oefcuhcmtxnrqydk6u-story.html>

As a professor, but even moreso as a citizen of Baltimore -- blighted by a vicious cycle of criminality and expensive incarceration (**which costs some \$46,000 a year**), I ask that we embed educational opportunities into our prison system and give people that second chance.

This is one of those rare issues that people across the political spectrum, "left" and "right," have come to agree on – President Obama's Second Chance Pell-Grant program was later endorsed and expanded by Betsy DeVos.

Prison education is that "sweet spot" where fiscal prudence, public safety, and humanitarianism all meet. HB416 will provide powerful support for such programs in Maryland.

Thank you for your attention, and vote –
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