

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB416

Position: Favorable

17 February 2023

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and the members of the Appropriations Committee,

The University of Maryland, Student Government Association supports HB416 in requiring that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services assist inmates in accessing pell grants for higher education and the Department of Labor assist in tracking numbers and goals for the education programs. This bill is important because it ensures equal access to higher education for all individuals.

I am a fourth-generation student here at the University of Maryland. I am also the son of a formerly incarcerated individual. These two aspects of my family are in stark contrast to one another. On one hand, I've been told cautionary tales about not taking 8:00 AM classes and making sure I don't stay out too late on any given Friday night. On the other hand, my father told cautionary tales about not ending up in prison and how to ration the little money you make while incarcerated on commissary snacks. While I never imagined these two aspects of my background would cross, I was shocked to learn the bed I was sleeping on in Elkton hall was manufactured by prisoners whose wages start at seventeen cents, through the Maryland Correctional Enterprises.

Incarcerated individuals deserve to be given the tools to access higher education, rather than just the tools to build furniture for these institutions. A strong first step towards that change would come directly from this legislation and the education it would provide to so many inmates and their families for generations. I can only imagine how my father would have felt being able to participate in those cautionary conversations before I started attending the University of Maryland.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB416.

Thank you,



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