



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 29, 2023

**Testimony of Delegate Marlon Amprey in Support of House Bill 416
Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act**

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings and the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Our state and nation faces a crisis in the number of incarcerated individuals, and the growing shortage of available talent threatens to hinder economic growth. Our public safety issues around recidivism are directly connected to our inability to holistically support and rehabilitate the incarcerated. House Bill 416 (HB416) works to address our inequitable system by utilizing an all hands on deck approach.

Eighty-three percent of state prisoners released nationwide are rearrested within nine years following their release¹, twenty-seven percent of formerly incarcerated people are unemployed, and twenty-five percent are without a high school diploma, GED or college degree.² Data shows that connecting incarcerated individuals to high-quality educational programming reduces the likelihood of recidivism and increases the likelihood of post-release employment.³

We need HB416 in order to improve the inmate rehabilitation process by increasing incarcerated persons' access to, and facilitating their success in, higher education programs and other social emotional programming. HB416 will require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to assist inmates in accessing federal Pell Grants by consulting with higher education institutions located in Maryland. Additionally, the Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Education, and the Department of Human Services will be required to work together to set goals for the number of inmates in education programs and establish a tracking system. Further, HB416 establishes a Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission, which will translate the education tracking data into planning, programs, and policies to improve inmate rehabilitation through education.

¹ Wilson, C., & Witter, B. (2020). *The master plan: My journey from life in prison to a life of purpose*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

² https://www.prisonpolicy.org/research/recidivism_and_reentry/

³ Wilson, C., & Witter, B. (2020). *The master plan: My journey from life in prison to a life of purpose*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

HB416 can make a huge difference in Maryland, where we have an incarceration rate of 531 per 100,000 people (including prisons, jails, immigration detention, and juvenile justice facilities). To put this number into context, the total United States incarceration rate is 664 per 100,000 people, whereas in the United Kingdom it is only 129 per 100,000.⁴ Maryland has a recidivism rate of roughly 40%, which places it among the top 25% recidivism rates in the country. We can and must do better.

Recidivism is not only troublesome for our communities but it has a negative economic impact on the State. The economic impact of Maryland Correctional Enterprises to the State of Maryland was \$67.3 million in Fiscal Year 2020.⁵ Quality prison programming in tandem with earned credit systems is proven to reduce reincarceration, thus investing in system tracking and increased access to federal Pell Grants will reduce long term costs associated with sentence lengths and reduce recidivism rates.

The evidence is clear: inmates who participate in higher education programs while incarcerated are 28% less likely to recidivate than those who do not. It is critical for the success of inmates as well as the public safety to provide inmates the resources and education needed to successfully rehabilitate and prevent re-incarceration in the future.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote favorably on HB 416.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marlon Amprey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marlon" being the most prominent.

Delegate Marlon Amprey
40th Legislative District of Maryland

⁴ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/MD.html>

⁵ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/criminal.html>