



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 620

Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

TO: Hon. Brian Feldman, Chair, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

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FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Consultant

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF) advocates for legislative initiatives to strengthen urban communities by helping fathers and families achieve stability and economic success. CFUF supports Senate Bill 620 as a means of improving the employment prospects of incarcerated individuals and promoting successful reentry and rehabilitation.

Formerly incarcerated individuals face immense obstacles in their reentry, including barriers to employment that affect many other aspects of life, including the ability to afford child support, healthcare, and necessities. These obstacles could be partially ameliorated through education, which is why CFUF supports Senate Bill 620.

Prison educational programs are cost-effective investments. Research shows a 13% increase in post-release employment for those participating in prison education programs and a 43% reduction in recidivism. A University of California study found that for every \$1 invested, taxpayers save \$5 in re-incarceration costs during the first three years post-release due to the lower recidivism rate. Benefits extend to individuals receiving education, who are more likely to have lower unemployment and improved health outcomes, as well as to the families they support and the communities they are part of upon reentry.

Higher education programs are often out of reach financially for many, and especially more so for low-income individuals, including incarcerated persons. However, the expanded availability of Pell Grants to this population now allows for greater flexibility and access. Pell Grant revisions and other scholarship opportunities are now available for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, reducing the cost of pursuing postsecondary education credentials. But often, incarcerated persons need to learn how to access these materials, if they are even available. CFUF specifically lauds the bill's provision to connect students to these funding opportunities and to create best practices for doing so by consulting with institutions of higher education best poised to advise on this matter.

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CFUF further supports bill provisions around collecting data on the number of participants in jail and prison education programs to determine their impact on returning citizens. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 620.

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