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SB0620

February 28, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 620– Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 620.

SB 620 provides incarcerated individuals in Maryland with assistance in accessing federal resources for higher education and requires the tracking of enrollment and academic performance data in order to monitor progress in expanding postsecondary education among incarcerated individuals. This is important because higher education in the corrections setting has been shown to improve facility safety in addition to reducing recidivism and improving the reentry and workforce outcomes of participating students.

This legislation requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to assist incarcerated individuals with access to Federal Pell Grants by consulting with specified higher education institutions in Maryland. In addition, SB 620 requires the Department of Labor and Employment to establish a tracking system for the number of incarcerated individuals in education programs and their progress, including credits earned. This information is to be shared with the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Prisons with college programs have fewer violent incidents. Equally important, higher education in the corrections setting helps to break the cycle of poverty and incarceration. Incarcerated individuals who receive higher education are 48% less likely to recidivate. They have opportunities for higher paying jobs upon release and the children of parents who complete college are also more likely attend college.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 620.