



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Chairman Brian J. Feldman
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for **Senate Bill 620 – Resources and Education for All (REAP Act)**, a bill that requires the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to assist inmates in accessing Pell grants for higher education. It also requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MDOL) to establish a goal number for the number of inmates in educational programs, in addition to monitoring their progress in said programs. **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

Across the United States, about 75% of state inmates did not complete high school. Conversely, only 35% of state inmates have obtained their general education diploma (GED). The number decreases regarding higher education, as only 2 percent of inmates in the U.S. have an Associate degree, followed by only 1 percent having obtained a Bachelor degree. Additionally, formerly incarcerated people are 8 times more likely to not complete their college education compared to the general public.

Black incarcerated individuals in Maryland also feel the brunt of incarceration and its impact on their ability to access educational programs once they're released from prison. Black people make up 30 percent of Maryland's general population; however, they constitute 69% of people in Maryland's prisons. The education of prison inmates has been shown to reduce recidivism by 40-50%, and as such, it's important to make higher education more accessible for Black inmates in Maryland by granting them access to tuition assistance.

Senate Bill 620 will equalize access to higher education for all Black individuals in Maryland by granting inmates the ability apply or and receive Pell grants for tuition and supplies. This bill will also mandate that the MDOL track the progress of the inmates' progress and a goal for the number of inmates who are enrolled in and have completed their programs. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports **Senate Bill 620** and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland