

2024-02-28 SB620 (Support).pdf

Uploaded by: Adam Spangler

Position: FAV

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ANTHONY G. BROWN
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STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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February 28, 2024

TO: The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Tiffany Clark
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

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

The Office of Attorney General urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 620 sponsored by Senator Jill Carter. This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to assist individuals in its custody in accessing federal Pell grants for higher education.

A Pell grant is a federal grant given to individuals who display exceptional financial need to attend a postsecondary institution of higher education. Under most situations, a Pell grant does not need to be repaid. The Pell grant is available to all qualified incarcerated individuals to further pursue post-secondary education, however, the majority of incarcerated individuals in correctional institutions in the State are unaware of what Pell grants are and how they can be beneficial to them both while incarcerated and in their communities.

Senate Bill 620 further requires the Maryland Department of Labor (DOL) to set goals for the number of inmates in education programs and to establish tracking systems relating to the number of inmates and their progress in education programs. Finally, Senate Bill 620 requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the Department of Human Services to assist

DOL in establishing progress tracking systems. Providing individuals incarcerated in our correctional system with an education is one of the best ways to ensure individuals returning from prison successfully reenter their communities and avoid recidivism. The return on this educational investment not only benefits the formerly incarcerated, but also taxpayers who would otherwise have to support the incarceration of recidivists.

Senate Bill 620 brings together the necessary government agencies to provide educational wrap-around services and supports for incarcerated individuals and individuals reentering their communities after a term of incarceration. For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 620.

cc: The Honorable Jill Carter
Committee Members

SB0620 - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Kirsch

Position: FAV



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

Anne Bocchini Kirsch
Director of Advocacy, PREPARE
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SB0620 - Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act - Support

The REAP Act adds data tracking and reporting infrastructure to post-secondary education. With the current amendments, which place it properly in the Correctional Services Article (as opposed to Labor and Employment), it creates a permanent link between the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), which manages the administration of post-secondary programs, and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), which collects the Pell Grant data for all college programs in the state. This is a powerful collaboration because it will allow DPSCS to utilize the higher education data in case management and programming decisions and produce a report and dashboard to allow ongoing program analysis. The ground level data sharing infrastructure created by the REAP act in the first year after reinstatement of correctional Pell Grants will be the foundation for growth and improvement of higher education programs in Maryland prisons for years to come.

The Department of Labor (DLR) currently maintains data for GED and vocational programming and produces a yearly Correctional Education Council (CEC) report. This is a legislated system that ensures data is available and someone is accountable for answering questions. Because the Department of Labor does not manage the postsecondary correctional education programs, they do not have data on nor do they report on these programs. In fact, the 2021 FASFA Simplification Act requires this to be managed by DPSCS - a new mandate provided with the new financial opportunity of Pell Grants in a correctional setting. But a new opportunity requires new infrastructure, and that is where the REAP Act comes in.

The REAP act creates a state level reporting requirement for correctional postsecondary education, thereby securing the necessary resources and partnerships to ensure reporting and analysis is conducted and Maryland makes good use of the Pell opportunity and offers the most relevant case management to promote long term success in returning citizens.

PREPARE
PO Box 9738 Towson, MD 21284

SB0620_FAV_CFUF(1).PDF

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FAV



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

DATE: February 28, 2024

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.

For more information, contact:

Christopher Dews / Policy Consultant / 301-412-5399 / cdews@cgagroup.com



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.

For more information, contact:

Christopher Dews / Policy Consultant / 301-412-5399 / cdews@cgagroup.com

Carrington 2024 SB620HB92 REAP Act education for p

Uploaded by: Darrell Carrington

Position: FAV



CARRINGTON & ASSOCIATES, LLC
Integrity.Passion.Results
Since 2008

SB620/HB92 - Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

SUPPORT

Carrington & Associates, LLC is writing to express our full support for Senate Bill 620 and its companion House Bill 92, collectively known as the Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act. The proposed legislation, introduced by Senator Carter, outlines crucial initiatives that align with our commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals within the Division of Correction (DOC) in the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL).

The key provisions of SB620/HB92 include:

1. Setting Goals and Tracking Systems:

- MDL is mandated to establish goals for the number of incarcerated individuals in education programs.
- Implementation of tracking systems to monitor both the number of individuals participating in education programs and their progress.

2. Collaboration with Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC):

- Forwarding relevant data to MHEC to facilitate collaboration and support in creating the necessary tracking systems.

3. Funding for Marketing and Tracking Systems:

- Annual funding provided in the budget bill to support MDL's marketing efforts for education programs and the required tracking systems.

4. Assistance in Accessing Federal Pell Grants:

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) is directed to assist incarcerated individuals in accessing federal Pell Grants for higher education.

5. Reporting and Evaluation:

- Detailed reporting requirements for program participants, participating institutions, and an interim/final report by MHEC to the Governor and the General Assembly on the program's progress.

We believe that these initiatives are essential steps towards ensuring that incarcerated individuals have access to meaningful educational opportunities, ultimately contributing to their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

While we acknowledge the fiscal impact outlined in the Fiscal and Policy Note, we firmly believe that the long-term benefits of investing in education for incarcerated individuals far outweigh the associated costs. Education has proven to be a transformative force, reducing recidivism rates and creating a positive impact on communities.

For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully request a FAVORABLE report for SB620/HB92. If needed, we are available to provide additional information or answer any questions to facilitate the passage of this important legislation.

MSBA Testimony

Uploaded by: Doyle Niemann

Position: FAV



To: Members of The Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
From: Doyle Niemann, Chair, Legislative Committee, Criminal Law and Practice Section,
Maryland State Bar Association
Date: February 9, 2024
Subject: **SB620 - Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act**
Position: **SUPPORT**

The Legislative Committee of the Criminal Law & Practice Section of the Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) **Supports SB620 Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act**

This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to assist incarcerated individuals in applying for and taking advantage of federal Pell grants for education in cooperation with academic institutions in the state. It requires that the Department of Labor play a more active role in the provision of educational services to incarcerated individuals. This includes tracking participation, setting goals for participation and reporting on results.

The bill draws upon the evidence that education can play a large role in the reform, rehabilitation and successful reentry into civil society of individuals in our correctional system. It backs that evidence with specific guidance to DPSC and DOL that will allow the General Assembly and the public to see what is being done.

While the bill directs the Governor to include funds in his budget to assist in the marketing of the program to the target population of individuals, it does not specify the amount leaving that to the discretion of the agencies and the General Assembly.

For the reasons stated, we **Support SB620 - Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act.**

If you have questions about the position of the Criminal Law and Practice Section's Legislative Committee, please feel free to address them to me at 240-606-1298 or at doyleniemann@gmail.com.

Should you have other questions, please contact The MSBA's Legislative Office at (410) 387-5606..

2024 SB620 (REAP) - MOPD Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Elise Desiderio

Position: FAV



PAUL DeWOLFE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE

DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

MELISSA ROTHSTEIN
DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

KRYSTAL WILLIAMS

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIVISION

ELIZABETH HILLIARD
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIVISION

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: SB620 — Corr. Svcs.— Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: 02/28/2024

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 620.

Our experience as advocates for incarcerated clients shows us that many of our clients want to take part in programs generally and educational programs particularly, but that access is a serious impediment. Wait list lines can be months or years long. My clients tell me about these access problems regularly.

Moreover, at hearings on modification motions, parole consideration, and similar matters, judges and commissioners place particular emphasis on programming participation. These expectations simply don't line up with reality. Clients who are stuck on programming waitlists are thus at a significant disadvantage through no fault of their own.

Finally, our experience shows us that incarcerated persons need and deserve support in rejoining our community. Many of our clients serve decades-long sentences and re-enter the life we take for granted to see the world has changed dramatically. Re-entry programming helps people prepare to rejoin a changed community and thrive. Clients regularly tell me about how much they've gained from programs they've been able to participate in.

A stated policy purpose of incarceration is rehabilitation. This bill and the data collection and oversight it would provide for would get Maryland closer to that purpose. For these reasons, the Office of the Public Defender urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 620.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division

**Authored by: Elise Desiderio, Assistant Public Defender II, Appellate Division,
elise.desiderio@maryland.gov**

MD Catholic Conference_SB 620_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 28, 2024

SB 620
Rehabilitation and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act
Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
Senate Finance Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 620. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 620 would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that incarcerated individuals are provided assistance in accessing federal Pell Grant funds to aid in obtaining postsecondary degrees. The bill also requires the department to regularly assess and track the participation and progress of inmates in educational endeavors.

In its pastoral statement *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* (USCCB, 2000), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops cited the “absence of educational opportunities” among considerations “contributing to a high rate of recidivism”. The USCCB also cited “education” as one of the key “necessities that enable inmates to live in dignity”.

The Conference firmly supports systems of restorative justice, as the same are rooted in our faith tenets. This bill seeks to bolster inmates' access to postsecondary educational opportunities. As such, it represents a core value in systems of truly restorative justice. As opposed to a lock-and-key system of punishment, this legislation would propel incarcerated individuals to a world of opportunity, enabling successful reintegration into society and empower formerly incarcerated individuals to experience the dignity of work and provide direction in their lives outside of the prison walls. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 620.

sb620.pdf

Uploaded by: Jill Carter

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0620 – Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP)
Act
Before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
On February 28th 2024

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Senate Bill 0620 requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to assist incarcerated individuals in accessing federal Pell grants. SB0620 also ensures that these resources are being properly utilized by establishing tracking systems in relation to the number of incarcerated individuals in these programs as well as their respective progress with their completed college credit counts. This bill was introduced last session as HB0416 and was passed in Judicial Proceedings and Education, Energy, and the Environment with amendments, so this bill is a reintroduction of HB0416 with the amendments included.

SB0620 makes education far more accessible and equitable for one of our most in-need of population groups, those currently incarcerated. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, 25% of formerly incarcerated people are without a high school diploma, GED, or college degree. Concurrently, almost half of people with at least two arrests on their record have an income below \$10,000, with that group also having a 15% unemployment rate. Homelessness is also rife within this group,

with a rate of 570 people per 10,000 being homeless, compared to the general population's rate of 21 per 10,000. And what's the strongest predictor of recidivism? Poverty and homelessness.

The strongest way to prevent recidivism is through preventing poverty, and the strongest way to prevent poverty in formerly incarcerated individuals is through education and rehabilitation while they are currently in the prison system. Currently in Maryland there isn't much help, namely correctional education programs, for incarcerated people to be rehabilitated. Therefore, after serving their sentence, they go back into society without any tools to stop themselves from re-offending. 40.5% of formerly incarcerated individuals in Maryland re-offend within three years of finishing their sentence, ranking Maryland in the top 25% of recidivism rates in the US according to the Virginia Department of Corrections.

The prevalence of recidivism in Maryland also only serves to perpetuate our mass incarceration problem. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, Maryland has an incarceration rate of 531 per 10,000, which is below the national average of 664 but five times that of a *country* like the United Kingdom, with black people being incarcerated at 5.3 times greater a rate than white people. As of 2015, Maryland spent roughly \$45,000 per inmate, whereas federal Pell Grants, on average, being at \$4,500. It simply does not make economic sense to continue to let people re-enter the prison system when far better solutions exist, including in SB0620.

As such, I urge this committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 0620. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Jill P. Carter

HB 620 - Resources and Education for All Prisons (

Uploaded by: Kam Bridges

Position: FAV

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 620

Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

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

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: February 28, 2024

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports Senate Bill 620 as a means of improving employment prospects of incarcerated individuals and of 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 care services, healthcare, and other basic necessities. These obstacles could be partially ameliorated through education, which is why JOTF supports Senate Bill 620.

Prison educational programs are cost-effective investments. Research shows an 13% increase in post-release employment for those who participate 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 rates and improved health outcomes, as well as to the families they support and the communities they return to 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 do not know how to access these materials, or even that they are available. JOTF specifically lauds the bill's provision to market the existence of these programs to the populations who need them the most, and to create best practices for doing so by consulting with institutions of higher education best poised to advise on this matter.

JOTF further supports bill provisions around collecting data on the number of participants in jail and prison education programs, as a means of determining the impact of educational programs. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 620.

For more information, contact:

Kam Bridges / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org

SB 620-REAP Act-UULM-MD-Support-CandyClark.pdf

Uploaded by: Karen Clark

Position: FAV



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 620: Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
FROM: Karen "Candy" Clark, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland Criminal Justice Lead
DATE: February 27, 2024

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry asks for a favorable vote for **SB 620: (Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act.)** This bill aligns with our first principle; to honor the inherent worth and dignity of all people; which of course includes those behind the prison walls. One of the intent of prison is to have those behind the walls successfully reintegrate into their communities.

Research has shown that **rehabilitation and education** are THE most effective means to lower our recidivism rates. Both the Rand and Ford Foundations stress investing in rehabilitation/educational programs for prisoners to ensure a better chance of success.

Unfortunately, our current system has **little to no** rehabilitative treatment, which means that when an inmate leaves prison, they have **little to no** new skills with which to start a new life. So many resort to what they do know and turn to criminal acts in order to survive. In Maryland, 40% of those released from prison return within three years! The rate keeps climbing with time—at five years it's 76.6%. Calculating that the average cost to house a prisoner is \$38,000 per year, this is a costly and unproductive outcome.

Years ago, our prison systems had a robust educational system involving Pell Grants from the Federal Government. In 1994, Congress banned Pell Grants for prisons, (aided by support from then president Bill Clinton) and the prison culture became more hostile. This marked a change to a more 'tough on crime' approach. Unfortunately, it seems that approach did little to benefit the actual people who were in prison, other than increase their recidivism rate.

The prison research by the Abell Foundation' of Maryland's correctional system resulted in a report which advocated for strengthening correctional educational programs. To help motivate and give recognition to those trying to improve their education, a bill was passed several years ago that provided diminution credits for reaching specific educational goals like earning a GED or higher-level course work. It required that peoples' educational history be kept in their records and called for prison teachers to earn a competitive salary to attract more teachers.

UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,

www.uulmmd.org info@uulmmd.org www.facebook.com/uulmmd www.Twitter.com/uulmmd

In past years, both the Trump and the Obama administrations invested in pilot educational programs which produced positive results. The Federal Department of Education is expanding the Pell Grant Program to offer aid to 64% of Federal and State prisons.

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY NOT TO BE MISSED.

The Correctional Department is charged to work with the incarcerated to access Federal Grants in connection with Maryland colleges. The Correctional Department along with the Department of Human Services will work together to establish correctional programs and engage in a relationship ranging between higher-level Maryland colleges to Local Community colleges and prisons. Reporting and tracking methods will be included in gathering data which will support accountability.

We need to be "Smart On Crime" and give those behind the prison walls the tools that they need for a fresh start. This is why we support **SB 620: (Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act.)** The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland, asks your support to honor our returning citizens' dignity and worth by Voting Yes for SB 620.

Respectfully submitted ,

Karen Clark

UULM-MD Criminal Justice Lead

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2024 sb 620 REAP act in house.pdf

Uploaded by: Ken Phelps Jr

Position: FAV



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal
Public Policy
Network

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 620

FAVORABLE

Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

TO: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Co-Chair, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee; and Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair, Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Co-Chair, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 28, 2024:

The Episcopal Church at large and the Diocese of Maryland have embraced the concept of reparations, a concept not limited to financial considerations but to a leveling of the playing field across a broad spectrum of issues, including achieving equity in quality-of-life issues, such as education.

Research shows that correctional education not only significantly reduces recidivism, but also returns five times the amount of money invested. In simple terms RAND concluded that for every \$1 spent on correctional education \$5 is saved on future expenses for corrections. That means that education is one of the most effective weapons we have to not only combat crime but to turn criminals into law-abiding citizens, competent and skilled workers and responsible parents.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a favorable report on SB 620.

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sb620- REAP (education for inmates) EEE 2-28-2024.

Uploaded by: Lee Hudson

Position: FAV



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Testimony Prepared for the
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
on
Senate Bill 620
February 28, 2024
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to support restorative justice for adjudicated individuals in Maryland. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are a faith community with congregations in every jurisdiction of our State.

Our community has committed itself publicly to work and advocate for better outcomes for the incarcerated, and their communities. We have said, *(t)o dramatically increase chances for success, re-entry support must begin long before release from prison. By identifying needs such as basic life-skill and job-skill training, education and treatment needs at sentencing, and then comprehensively addressing these needs during incarceration, the likelihood of successful transition back into the community is heightened.* ("The Church and Criminal Justice", ELCA, 2013, pg. 45.)

By the way, the next sentence of this commitment reads, *The religious dimension of life is significant and deserves to be a major component of rehabilitative programs for those interested.* This we have done in Maryland since 1985 in the Community of St. Dymas, an authorized worshipping community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at the men's and women's facilities at Jessup. It is served by an ordained ELCA pastor. One of the aspirations of the ministry is successful reentry into community, family, and society for the incarcerated when they are released.

We hold what we believe can be a State interest in restorative justice, reducing recidivism and reclaiming human life for productive, thriving social engagement.

The pilot program under *Chapter 677 of 2021* was deemed successful. **Senate Bill 620** will expand that initiative to include education in a way that may fashion years lost to incarceration into time well-spent for amendment and progress in a human life. Because the State, its communities and the prisoner can all benefit, we ask your favorable report.

Lee Hudson

[2024 - 02.28] SB620 REAP Act - Written Testimony.

Uploaded by: Marlon Amprey

Position: FAV

MARLON AMPREY
Legislative District 40
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Economic Matters Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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410-841-3520 · 301-858-3520
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Marlon.Amprey@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

**Testimony of Delegate Marlon Amprey in Support of Senate Bill 620 Resources
and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act**

Dear Chair Feldman, Chair Beidle, and Members of the Finance and Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Our state and nation face a crisis in the growing numbers of incarcerated individuals. The available talent shortage threatens to hinder our economic growth. Public safety issues around recidivism are directly connected to our inability to support and rehabilitate the incarcerated holistically. Senate Bill 620 addresses our inequitable system by utilizing an all-hands-on-deck approach to improve rehabilitation.

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 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 public safety to provide inmates with the resources and education needed to rehabilitate and prevent re-incarceration in the future successfully.

Recidivism is troublesome for our communities and 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 2020.⁴ Quality prison programming in tandem with earned credit systems is proven to reduce re-incarceration. Thus, investing in system tracking and increasing access to federal Pell Grants will reduce long-term costs associated with sentence lengths and reduce recidivism rates. Our rates are

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.

⁴ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/criminal.html>

worse than Texas, Ohio, and Florida with 40% of offenders who go to Maryland jails re-offending and going back to jail.⁵ We must act now to prevent this number from growing.

We need SB620 to improve the inmate rehabilitation process by increasing incarcerated persons' access to higher education programs and aid in their success. SB620 will require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to assist inmates in accessing federal Pell Grants by consulting with higher education institutions in Maryland. Additionally, the Department of Labor and Employment, the 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.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote favorably on SB 620.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marlon Amprey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Delegate Marlon Amprey
40th Legislative District of Maryland

SB0620-EEE-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

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.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HB92 and 209 TESTIMON

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MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform Supports HB92 Resources and Education for All Prisons and HB209 Commission to Study Correctional Education in Maryland Prisons **February 28, 2024**

An effective correctional education program is most important for the state of Maryland in the fight against crime and the redemption of those behind bars. Does the state of Maryland, however, currently have a high-quality correctional education program behind bars? Recent studies strongly indicate the answer is no. What are the reasons for low student participation and program completion? One reason is that there is little or no incentive for incarcerated citizens to enroll in available secondary or career education classes to improve their lives and become productive and positive citizens. In Maryland there are fewer secondary and career technology programs than there were two decades ago. With the recent reinstatement of federal Pell Grants for prisoners will there be enough incarcerated students eligible for the available grants. The answer is not likely. Younger prisoners are enrolling at lower rates than older ones. How can we motivate more students to participate and improve the secondary and career education programs to reach more of them? HB92 will result in individual student educational plans and improve data collection to measure and improve program enrollment and completion. How can the Correctional Education Program improve the numbers of students receiving GEDs, career technical certificates and college degrees? HB 209 will authorize a Commission made up of all related agencies, along with education and criminal justice research experts, and concerned and impacted citizens to conduct an in-depth study to understand the problems and make recommendations for improvement to the Governor and the state Legislature. What do we currently know about Education programs in the Maryland Department of Correction?

By Stephen J. Steurer, PhD February 21.2024

Why is correctional education so important? The reasons are simple, education reduces recidivism, changes the lives of former offenders and their families, improves the community, and saves money by reducing future crime. The 2013-2014 RAND Corporation research of correctional education underpins the societal and financial benefits of correctional education. The conclusion of the RAND research is that it significantly lowers ex-offender recidivism and provides a very substantial return on our tax dollars, several times higher than the cost of the education programs.

Is Maryland utilizing education programs behind bars effectively? Since education reduces recidivism are we providing adequate programming? A review of over four decades of Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Department of Labor (DOL) and Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) annual reports demonstrates the answer is no. There are many devoted state employees in the Correctional Education program now run by DOL, but the actual number of teachers has dropped, and the number of academic and vocational program student completions has declined significantly in the last 15-20 years. The Abell Foundation 2017 study of students illustrated some of the numbers. The study showed that although the inmate population had doubled since 1982, in 2017 DOL was not serving larger numbers of inmate students. According to DOL annual reports there are significantly fewer teachers in the state facilities than there were two decades ago. And the annual GED completion numbers have dropped from a high of 1000 in fiscal years 1998 to 2000 to less than 500 in fiscal year 2017, to 0 (ZERO) during two years of COVID shutdown, and to 171 in 2022. DOL has not provided much information on GED testing and completions in recent years, even though it also administers the Maryland statewide GED testing program. While some of the decrease was due to the increased difficulty of the revised 2014 GED exam, the number of students enrolling and attending school has also dropped.

Waiting lists for school had skyrocketed with the passage of legislation a few years to increase the number of mandatory school attendance to 240 days. Ironically, many people who were court mandated to complete their GED have not been attending school. The percentage of Maryland prisoners without a high school diploma is around 50% and most of them have no gainful career training or job history. According to the 2017 Abell study of Maryland's correctional education programs only 15% of inmates participated in education in 2016. That is down from over 30% in 1989. Unfortunately, the Abell researchers were not able to obtain much more detail from the correctional system (DPSCS and DOL) about the educational programs to evaluate the overall quality and effectiveness for those students who did participate.

What are the reasons for low participation and completion? There are at least two causes for the low participation and completion rates. First, at intake the correctional system does not adequately assess and take into consideration an individual's education history or work status or use existing individual history as a consistent part of ongoing reentry program planning. Secondly, the incentives for inmates for educational participation are no better than prison maintenance jobs. In fact, many menial jobs pay more than the stipend for educational participation. A few decades ago, educational participation was treated as a special program awarding students an extra 5 days per month off their sentence for attendance. The waiting lists at most institutions were very long as a result. More teachers were hired, and night school was introduced. With budget cuts during tight economic times, most of those evening programs ended. After the state changed the teacher salary system, many teachers have left because of reduced pay scales.

Unfortunately, the number of special programs eligible for sentence reduction increased with potential students taking other assignments. As a result, school waiting lists and enrollment fell dramatically. With the introduction 4 years ago of a 240-day mandatory education participation for those without a high school credential, the waiting lists have dramatically increased. Sadly, testimony from incarcerated and newly released individuals indicates that people must wait months and years to enter school. Once enrolled, those who complete the 240-day requirement are often dropped from school, even before they complete the GED program. What can we expect from those released from prison without a high school diploma and/or a career certificate? Most of them will not find a job with a living wage and will likely return to prison to start the cycle all over again.

There is little or no incentive to attend secondary or career education classes. For several decades school participation resulted in significant time off sentence, but since many other program or job assignments result in the same amount of sentence reduction most people choose other programs that have no effect on their academic or vocational skills. In effect, they leave prison without improving their ability to find gainful employment beyond minimum wage. Testimony from recently released returning citizens who served time starting back in the 1980s and 1990s testify how they were motivated to go to school in the past and that currently incarcerated people no longer have the same motivation. The recently introduced Diminution law which awards 30 days for the acquisition of a GED or vocational certificate provides very little incentive. Many other states award larger sentence reduction awards, up to a year or more for acquisition of an AA or BA degree.

The state of Maryland has never funded post-secondary education in the prisons. Up until 1994 the State relied on Pell grants to fund college level programs delivered by

Hagerstown Community College, Coppin State University, University of Maryland Baltimore Campus, and Morgan State University. At the time Pell grants ended there were around 1,000 college students in Maryland prisons. By 1995, without federal or state funding the number dropped to 0.

Goucher College started its own privately funded program several years ago and more recently Georgetown University has initiated classes as well without Pell grant support. Certain Pell Grant funds became available in the last 7 years and several Maryland universities and colleges were awarded federal experimental Pell grants and initiated new programs. They included the University of Baltimore, Anne Arundel Community College, Wor-Wic Community College and Goucher College. With the full restoration of Pell grants for the incarcerated in 2023, Morgan State University, the University of Maryland Global Campus, Hagerstown Community College, and Georgetown University have applied for and received Pell Grant approval by the US Department of Education. At this point postsecondary institutions are poised to provide the highest quality courses in Maryland prisons. Is the secondary correctional education program ready to coordinate with them?

Will there be enough students eligible for Pell grants? Many of the Maryland prisoners with a high school diploma have low reading and math skills. Additionally, many who received their GED scored below college readiness. So, colleges and universities programs will be competing for a smaller number of students than indicated by high school completion data. The Correctional Education Program in DOL is the agency authorized to prepare students to complete academic and vocational secondary education and qualify for post-secondary academic and career education programs.

Most post-secondary students are over 30 years of age. Very few younger students are taking college level courses. Without adequate incentives to acquire a GED or participate in college programs there is a big question about how many young adults will matriculate into available post-secondary programs.

Ironically, according to a DOL correctional education administrator DOL decided not to take responsibility for coordinating their secondary programs with post-secondary courses from the various colleges. They passed the responsibility to the DOC which created a new unit and hired a correctional education coordinator and staff to take over the responsibility. Does that make sense? The result is coordination between the DOL Correctional Education Program, and the programs offered by various colleges and universities. A 2020 national research report by Educational Testing Service indicates that states with high level leadership, well-funded, and well-organized correctional education programs result in consistent and higher student outcomes. Those with

decentralized and low-level supervisory authority have much weaker completion and achievement rates.

How can we improve correctional education outcomes? HB92 will result in individual student educational plans and improve data collection to measure program enrollment and completion. The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) endorses HB92 (REAP) because it would focus on the educational outcomes of Maryland prisoners, thereby enhancing public safety and, subsequently, saving on the costs of future incarceration. HB92 will create an imperative for DOL, MSDE, DPSCS and colleges and universities to work together to develop a data collection and tracking system and create goals for the number of inmates in educational programs.

How can we make correctional education programs improve the numbers of students receiving GEDs, career technical certificates and college degrees? The Correctional Education Program is not producing the results that it has accomplished in the past according to what we already know from several decades of the agency's annual reports. While we have outcome data the reasons for the deterioration of correctional education and the steps that need to be taken to repair the damage can only come from a nonpartisan commission with membership representing all the agencies involved, criminal justice experts, and concerned citizens including returning citizens.

Brief Biography of Stephen J. Steurer, PhD

Most of his professional adult life has been devoted to the education of Maryland's incarcerated adults and juveniles. His entire career has been in public school and prison education, including the Maryland adult and juvenile education systems. Over a decade ago he retired from Maryland state service after serving as the Academic Education Coordinator for Correctional Education at the Maryland State Department of Education for 30 years. In addition, he was the Executive Director of the national non-profit Correctional Education Association for many years. Additionally, he participated in and published correctional education research over the years, most recently for the RAND Corporation and Educational Testing Service Center for Human Capital and Education. Today his role is primarily as a volunteer for the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, as national Education/Reentry Advocate for CURE National, and as a board member of the national Petey Greene Program and the Barbara Bush Foundation.

Correctional Education Research Sources

The RAND Corporation conducted the research that proved the connection between education participation while incarcerated and the drop in future recidivism with its 2014 study *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education*. RAND has conducted additional research which further confirmed and refine the conclusions of the 2014 study.

The 2017 report of the Abell Foundation identifies the untapped potential of correctional education in Maryland to improve criminal justice outcomes. That report, *Prison Education, Maximizing the Potential for Employment and Successful Community Reintegration*, recommended an enhanced incentive system. HB416 encourages an improved planning system and authorizes the creation of just such an incentive system.

The 2017 report of the Abell Foundation identifies the untapped potential of correctional education in Maryland to improve criminal justice outcomes. That report, *Prison Education, Maximizing the Potential for Employment and Successful Community Reintegration*, recommended an enhanced incentive system. HB0294 encourages an improved planning system and authorizes the creation of just such an incentive system.

In 2020 Educational Testing Service Center for Research and Human Capital and Education published a comprehensive report *How to Unlock the Power of Prison Education* on prison education in the United States and made several recommendations for the improvement of educational program delivery.

LBCMD Priority Support Letter - SB 620.docx.pdf

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Position: FAV



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February 28, 2024

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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

SWASC Testimony - SB 620.pdf

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL SB 620
Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act
Education, Energy, and Environment and Finance Committees
February 28, 2024

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports SB 620, which will require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to assist incarcerated individuals in accessing federal Pell Grants for higher education, require the Maryland Department of Labor to have set goals of incarcerated individuals in education programs, establish tracking systems on the amount of incarcerated individuals and their progress in education programs, and forward data to the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

SB 620 aligns with the social work core values of social justice, and dignity and worth of a person. This bill will provide resources and supports to help incarcerated individual overcome some of the barriers they face through access to education. Moreover, the programs proposed in this bill provide a reparation for the labor that incarcerated individuals provide for the furniture in the University System of Maryland, and is a cost-effective approach to workforce development.

SB 620 would enhance an incarcerated person's right to an education. A research study titled "Prison, College, and the Labor Market: A Critical Analysis by Formerly Incarcerated and Justice-Impaired Students," demonstrates the need for more inclusive education programming for those that are incarcerated as education policy tends to focus more on reducing recidivism rates, which is barrier for those that are in the system. The bill can also incentivize enrollment for colleges by using the Pell Grants as a recruitment strategy, establish a culture of encouragement and engagement will be fostered in correctional facilities, and allow incarcerated individuals to be equipped and prepared for a highly competitive labor market.¹

1. Quach, K., Cerda-Jara, M., Deverux, R., & Smith, J. (2022). Prison, College, and the Labor Market: A Critical Analysis by Formerly Incarcerated and Justice-Impacted Students. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 701(1), 78-97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162221112772>
2. Delegate Young, et al. (2023). *Correctional Services - Maryland Correctional Enterprises - Minimum Wage and Inmate Financial Accounts*. Department of Legislative Services. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2019RS/fnotes/bil_0003/hb1123.pdf
3. Hogan, J. (2021, February 5). *Bill would require minimum wage pay for Maryland inmates*. NBC4 Washington. <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/bill-would-require-minimum-wage-pay-for-maryland-inmates/2563185/>
4. Burke, L. (2020, February 13). Public universities in several states are required to buy from prison industries. *Inside Higher Ed | Higher Education News, Events and Jobs*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/02/14/public-universities-several-states-are-required-buy-prison-industries>
5. Bent, S. (2023, November 20). Investing in prison education: A cost-effective approach to workforce development and economic growth. IAWP. <https://iawponline.org/investing-in-prison-education-a-cost-effective-approach-to-workforce-development-and-economic-growth/>

SB 620 will be a source of reparation for the free and cheap labor that incarcerated individuals contribute to the University System of Maryland through Maryland Correctional Enterprises. In a NBC4 Washington report, for voluntary prison employment and training, those that are incarcerated can make as little as \$0.17. The starting pay scale for incarcerated individuals for unskilled positions from \$2.16 to the state minimum wage, which is currently \$15.³ The University System of Maryland and other state public university systems are mandated by the state to use correctional enterprises for their source of furniture and a bill like this would allow incarcerated individuals to benefit from the fruits of their labor.⁴

SB 620 is a cost-effective approach to workforce development and would help reduce recidivism. In their report titled, “Investing in prison education: A cost-effective approach to workforce development and economic growth,” the International Association of Workforce Professionals found that the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with over 2.2 million people behind bars and the direct costs of incarceration are estimated to be over \$180 billion per year. To reduce the costs of incarceration, the conditions of those incarcerated should improve. Prison education programs have been found to reduce recidivism rates, increase employment rates, increase employment wages, and improve cognitive skills, social skills, and self-esteem. It also increases the labor supply, reduces the skills gap, and reduces employer reliance on temporary and low-wage workers. A 2018 study found that for every dollar invested in prison education programs, taxpayers pay between \$2.50 and \$5.00 in reincarceration costs.⁵

This bill will give access and investment to individuals that are incarcerated that are seeking rehabilitation and professional development when they re-enter society. **Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on SB 620.**

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

1. Quach, K., Cerda-Jara, M., Deverux, R., & Smith, J. (2022). Prison, College, and the Labor Market: A Critical Analysis by Formerly Incarcerated and Justice-Impacted Students. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 701(1), 78-97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162221112772>
2. Delegate Young, et al. (2023). *Correctional Services – Maryland Correctional Enterprises – Minimum Wage and Inmate Financial Accounts*. Department of Legislative Services. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2019RS/fnotes/bil_0003/hb1123.pdf
3. Hogan, J. (2021, February 5). *Bill would require minimum wage pay for Maryland inmates*. NBC4 Washington. <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/bill-would-require-minimum-wage-pay-for-maryland-inmates/2563185/>
4. Burke, L. (2020, February 13). *Public universities in several states are required to buy from prison industries*. Inside Higher Ed | Higher Education News, Events and Jobs. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/02/14/public-universities-several-states-are-required-buy-prison-industries>
5. Bent, S. (2023, November 20). *Investing in prison education: A cost-effective approach to workforce development and economic growth*. IAWP. <https://iawponline.org/investing-in-prison-education-a-cost-effective-approach-to-workforce-development-and-economic-growth/>

SB620_USM_FWA.pdf

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SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 620
Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act
February 28, 2024
Favorable with Amendment

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, thank you for allowing the University System of Maryland (USM) the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 620.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of University USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

Senate Bill 620 requires the Department of Public Safety and Services (DPSCS) to set goals for the number of inmates in rehabilitation programs and establish a tracking system. More importantly, the bill seeks to assist inmates in accessing federal Pell Grants for higher education.

In response to the growing societal needs of cities across the state and nation, the USM Board of Regents began to explore the development of an expanded prison education program to provide Maryland inmates with educational opportunities while incarcerated; give them hope and employment opportunities following release; reduce recidivism; save the State of Maryland money; and grow enrollment.

In fall of 2022, an exploratory group, led by Regents Bill Wood and Robert Hur and Chancellor Jay Perman, began collecting information from higher education institutions with established prison education programs, including the University of Baltimore, to determine the strengths and weaknesses of [expanding prison education programs within the USM](#). Chancellor Perman announced the formation of a workgroup with representatives from USM institutions, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, MHEC, and the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to explore the potential benefits of such a program.

The USM stands ready to partner in this effort to improve access for inmates in prisons to pursue higher education and in fact has been working in this space to continue expanding educational opportunities. USM's efforts, coupled with the power of The Second Chance Pell Program, led by DPSCS, offer a real opportunity for inmates to receive federal funding to enroll in postsecondary programs at colleges and universities. Maryland is unique in the number of higher education institutions to provide services to incarcerated individuals. Senate Bill 620 expands the Program to allow more inmates to participate and earn a postsecondary degree.

We applaud the sponsor and the legislature in their efforts in supporting this legislation. In fact, the USM is so supportive it's important to **expand** the number of USM institutions participating in these efforts.

On Page 2, after line 15, new lines to read:

- (9) FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY;**
- (10) COPPIN STATE UNIVERSITY;**
- (11) SALISBURY UNIVERSITY;**
- (12) TOWSON UNIVERSITY;**
- (13) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE;**
- (14) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY;**
- (15) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, EASTERN SHORE**
- (16) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK;**
- (17) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE.**



Contact: Susan Lawrence, Vice Chancellor for Government Relations, slawrence@usmd.edu

SB 620 REAP FAV.pdf

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Position: FWA



Support with Amendments

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment and Finance Committee Senate Bill 620 (Carter) Resources and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

Matt Power, President

mpower@micua.org

February 28, 2024

On behalf of the member institutions of the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and the nearly 55,000 students we serve, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of [Senate Bill 620 \(Carter\) Resources and Education for All Prisons \(REAP\) Act](#). This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Services (DPSCS) to set goals for the number of inmates in rehabilitation programs, establish a tracking system for the number of inmates in rehabilitation programs, establish a tracking system for the progress of inmates in rehabilitation programs, assist inmates in accessing federal Pell Grants for higher education and adopt regulations to carry out the bill's provisions.

The Second Chance Pell Program, led by DPSCS, offers an opportunity for inmates to receive federal funding to enroll in postsecondary programs at colleges and universities. Maryland is unique in the number of higher education institutions to provide services to incarcerated individuals. The [Goucher College Prison Education Partnership \(GPEP\)](#), founded in 2012, collaborates with DPSCS to offer college courses. GPEP offers a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) and the Maryland Correctional Institution in Jessup, Maryland. With over a decade of experience, GPEP provided more than 200 college courses to over 300 students with access to more than 100 professors. GPEP participants can complete their studies at the institution or, upon release, transfer their college credits to any accredited college or university in the nation. SB 620 expands the Program to allow more inmates to participate and earn a postsecondary degree. GPEP is eager to build upon its existing relationship with DPSCS and provide educational opportunities to even more incarcerated individuals.

We appreciate the effort that the sponsor has made to improve access for inmates in prisons to pursue higher education. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Irnande Altama, Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs, ialtema@micua.org.

***For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a favorable Committee report for
Senate Bill 620.***

SB620_DPSCS_LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Catherine Kahl

Position: INFO



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of Government & Legislative Affairs

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REENTRY SERVICES

JANELLE B. MUMMEY
DIRECTOR

BILL: SENATE BILL 620

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: Senate Bill 620 will require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to assist incarcerated individuals in accessing federal pell grants. In addition, the bill would require the Department of Labor to establish a tracking system for the number of individuals participating in education programs.

COMMENTS:

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services' (Department) Division of Correction operates 13 State correctional facilities housing offenders sentenced to periods of incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also oversees five facilities located in Baltimore City that houses pretrial detainees and incarcerated individuals sentenced to incarceration for periods of 18 months and less.
- The Department currently has partnerships with several colleges and universities who were awarded Second Chance Pell Grants, including Goucher College; Georgetown University; Wor-Wic Community College; the University of Baltimore, and Bowie State.
- Additionally, several colleges and universities are currently in the Prison Education Program approval process, such as Anne Arundel Community College, Hagerstown Community College, and the University System of Maryland.
- While the Department of Labor oversees correctional education in partnership with DPSCS, consisting of Adult Basic Education, GED, and occupational programs, post secondary education programs are overseen by the DPSCS Director of Education.
- The Higher Education data required by this bill is already collected by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). As such, the Department can work in partnership with MHEC to establish a tracking system for post secondary education

programs.

- The Department would need to complete programmatic modifications to the Offender Case Management System (OCMS) in order to receive this data from MHEC.
- The total cost to the Department to develop its own separate tracking system would have a significant fiscal impact on the Department in addition to the programmatic modifications to the OCMS in order to capture the data.

CONCLUSION: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates Senate Bill 620.