

SB0623 - Support.pdf

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Position: FAV



PREPARE
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SBO623 - Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission - SUPPORT

Maryland currently collects data about correctional education programs. The Department of Labor offers reporting on GED education and vocational training programs, while MHEC and DPSCS have data that will hopefully be merged into a useful report by the REAP Act (SBO620) this year. With the current reinstatement of Pell Grants in correctional settings, this data is becoming even more critical than before if we are to maximize the resources available and give every incarcerated Marylander the chance to leave prison with the education and training necessary to be successful in the community. But data alone is only the foundation - in order for that data to become useful, it must be reviewed, analyzed, and then action must be taken on the findings.

SBO623 begins to build the structure on top of the foundation laid by the current DLR data and the prospective DPSCS/MHEC data from the Pell Grant implementation. First, it collects data about the subject of correctional education that is currently spread across multiple departments and consolidates it. Then, it tasks a specific and diverse group of people with reviewing these important correctional education reports and reaching out to a group of experts for further information. That group will then generate a consolidated report based on their findings to offer guidance to the General Assembly, where necessary changes can be made. While this bill is for a one-time commission, should the findings be useful, I would put forth the idea that perhaps a permanent board might be one positive outcome. However, this bill gives Maryland a chance to see exactly how impactful that analysis may be in planning for our future.

This is a low risk, high reward bill. It costs very little in terms of funding, but has the potential to add a high level of operational efficiency to multiple departments by fostering better communication and offering practical solutions. It will improve services to a vulnerable population that is in critical need of them. It will help Maryland utilize the resources we already have to get more done. And down the road, when people leave prison more prepared, it will make our communities safer.

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MD Catholic Conference_SB 623_FAV.pdf

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MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 29, 2024

SB 623
Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission

Senate Finance Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 623. 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 623 would establish the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission. The Commission would be required to convene an advisory stakeholder group with specific qualifications and work with the advisory stakeholder group to conduct roundtable discussion forums seeking public input in all geographic regions of the State. The Commission would also have to develop an education-focused statewide framework of policies to invest in strategies to increase public safety and reduce recidivism of adult offenders. The Commission would be charged with gathering stakeholder input on research best practices for the primary, secondary, postsecondary, and career or vocational education of those who are subject to the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Lastly, the Commission would identify measures to mitigate risk factors that contribute to adult contact with the criminal justice system, with a focus on education.

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. Access to education within corrections systems are a core value in systems of truly restorative justice. As opposed to a lock-and-key system of punishment, this legislation may better equip Maryland to 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 623.

623.pdf

Uploaded by: Jill Carter

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0623 – Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission
Finance Committee
On February 29th 2024

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

Senate Bill 0623 establishes the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission that provides our state with recommendations relating to education and its impact on the criminal justice system. The Commission must submit an interim report of its findings which shall include tracking of education rates and levels of incarcerated individuals. All data will be translated into planning, programs, and policies to help improve inmate rehabilitation through education. The commission will consist of members from:

- **The Senate & House of Representatives**
- **Departments of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and Labor**
- **State Superintendent of Schools**
- **State Public Defender's Office**
- **Appointments from the Governor's Office**

The state of Maryland compared to other states has had high recidivism rates despite there being improvements in the states criminal justice system. Maryland has a forty percent recidivism rate indicating that almost half of the offenders who go through Maryland jails and prisons will reoffend. SB0623 will have a huge impact on the growing number of incarcerated people within the state, by promoting rehabilitation that focuses on educational opportunities. Evidence has shown that incarcerated individuals who participate in educational programs are less likely to recidivate than those who do not.

The commission will work with the advisory stakeholder group, including, conducting roundtable discussions forums seeking public input in all geographic regions of the state. The commission will also develop an education-focused statewide framework of policies to invest in strategies to increase public safety and reduce the recidivism rates of adult offenders by using a data-driven approach. Technical assistance will also be requested from several reputable foundations and organizations such as the Abell Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Council of State Governments, RAND Corporation, and many more.

As lawmakers it is important that we establish this commission and advocate for the success of incarcerated individuals in our state. For these reasons I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 0623.

Respectfully,

Senator Jill P. Carter

SB0623 - MSBA Criminal Law Section - Support Lette

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Position: FAV



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To: Members of the Senate Finance Committee
From: Doyle Niemann, Chair, Legislative Committee, Criminal Law and Practice Section,
Maryland State Bar Association
Subject: **SB623 - Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission**
Date: February 28, 2024
Position: **Favorable**

The Legislative Committee of the Criminal Law & Practice Section of the Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) **Supports SB623 Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission.**

This bill will create a broadly based commission and related stakeholder bodies that will develop an education-focused policy to increase public safety and reduce recidivism on the part of criminal offenders. This will include an advisory stakeholder group, conducting meetings across the state and looking at evidence-based educational approaches that reduce recidivism and increase public safety.

There is considerable research and direct evidence that education can play a big role in helping incarcerated individuals and those involved with the criminal justice system overcome the reasons they have engaged or may engage in criminal activity and become stable and fully functioning members of society. The establishment of the kind of broadly based commission as envisioned in the bill will focus attention on best practices and what can be realistically done and help point the way towards positive change for individuals involved in the system and for public safety.

For the reasons stated, we Support SB623 Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission.

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

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HB92 and 209 TESTIMON

Uploaded by: Stephen Steurer

Position: FAV

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 non-partisan 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.

SB 623 Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission

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Position: FWA



Support with Amendments

Senate Finance Committee *Senate Bill 623 (Carter) Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission*

Matt Power, President
mpower@micua.org
February 29, 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 support with amendments of [Senate Bill 623 \(Carter\) Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission](#). This bill establishes the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission to develop recommendations related to education and its impact on the criminal justice system. MICUA respectfully requests the sponsor consider an amendment to add one representative from the Goucher College Prison Education Partnership to the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission.

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 Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (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 Goucher or, upon release, transfer their college credits to any accredited college or university in the nation. SB 623 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. Including a representative from GPEP on the Commission would provide trained individuals in educational settings to contribute to prison education reform.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Irnande Altema, Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs, ialtema@micua.org.

For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a favorable Committee report, with amendments, for Senate Bill 623.

NCADD-MD - 2024 SB 623 FWA - Prison Education Deli

Uploaded by: Nancy Rosen-Cohen

Position: FWA



Senate Finance Committee

February 29, 2024

Senate Bill 623 - Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission

Support with Amendment

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 623 with one amendment. Establishing a Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission to develop recommendations relating to education and its impact on the criminal justice system could lead to increased employment and a reduction in recidivism. These factors also play a significant role in people with substance use disorders maintaining recovery.

As reported by the Vera Institute, people engaged in postsecondary education in prison are 48% less likely to recidivate than those who do not and the odds of recidivism decrease as people who are incarcerated achieve higher levels of education.¹ The Brookings Institution also reports that literature has consistently shown that prison education improves post-release employment outcomes.²

According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice, peer support is a proven resource to address challenges related to substance use disorders and mental health conditions in both correctional and community settings to support recovery from, prepare for release, and facilitate reentry.³ As such, NCADD-Maryland asks for an amendment to Senate Bill 623 that adds the experience of peers to the advisory stakeholder group.

Amendment No. 1

On pages 2 and 3:

- (1) convene an advisory stakeholder group that includes organizations with experience in:
 - (i) criminal justice policy reform;
 - (ii) advocating for individuals with learning disabilities and those from marginalized communities; ~~and~~
 - (iii) restorative justice; and
 - (iv) peer recovery support services.**

(over)

¹ <https://www.vera.org/news/back-to-school-a-common-sense-strategy-to-lower-recidivism>

² Cho, R.M., & Tyler, J.H. (2013). Does prison-based adult basic education improve postrelease outcomes for male prisoners in Florida? *Crime & Delinquency*, 59, 975–1,005; Davis, L.M., Bozick, R., Steele, J.L., Saunders, J., & Miles, J.N.V. (2013). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs that Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation; Duwe, Grant and Valerie Clark (2014). The effects of prison-based educational programming on recidivism and employment. *The Prison Journal*, 94, 454–478.

³ https://www.cossup.org/Content/Documents/Publications/Altarum_PRSS_in_Correctional_Settings.pdf

Rationale: There is a growing use of certified peer recovery specialists who work with people who are incarcerated. There are also people who are incarcerated who are getting the training to become certified peer recovery specialists. These are effective services and should be better incorporated into carceral and re-entry settings.

With this amendment, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 623.