



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

March 5, 2024

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 0209
Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am a registered voter residing in District #41. Although I work in the field of parole education and advocacy, I engage in adult reentry services and juvenile justice and criminal justice reform. Unfortunately, I was adjudicated as a fifteen year old and served over 42 continuous years in prison. After a horrible start and with the support of others, I began to work on reforming myself.

Educational, vocational, cognitive behavior, community service, and therapy programming were essential to my growth and development. In fact, I benefited from the PELL Grant during an era when local colleges and universities had extension programs throughout Md's prison system. I earned an A.A. Degree in Business Administration; then, I transferred to Morgan State University's program where I accumulated 112 credits towards a B.S. Degree in Business Management.

Unfortunately, before I could complete my degree, the PELL grants were discontinued for prisoners. Needless to say, the federal restriction ended higher education extension programs. I was directly impacted in another way. I have remained an undergraduate for over twenty-nine years. I did not have an opportunity to complete my degree while in the prison system. Furthermore, since so much time has lapsed, I am having difficulty utilizing those credits to complete my degree.

During the last 10-15 years of my incarceration, there were accredited college programs at certain facilities which could have aided in completing my degree. Either I did not know about the programs, didn't qualify to be transferred to facilities where these programs were available, or prison officials were not aware of my situation. So, there is a need for DPSCS to establish tracking systems related to prison educational programs, to assist incarcerated individuals with accessing educational grants and to establish attainable goals related to educational and vocational programs.

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I have found education to be one of the greatest tools countering recidivism. I believe that failures such as the one I and so many others experienced should not continue. Thus, I ask this Honorable Committee to vote favorably for SB 0209.

Truly yours,

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