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**Written Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
SB 690 - Higher Education - Scholarships for Correctional Officers
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FAVORABLE

Chair Feldman and members of the Committee, AFT Maryland supports SB 690, which seeks to expand the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program to include correctional officers. This legislation represents a critical step to recognize the essential role that correctional officers play in our criminal justice system and provides them with the educational opportunities necessary for career advancement and professional development.

Correctional officers are an integral part of Maryland's public safety network. In the critical nature of their work, correctional officers often face significant professional challenges, including high levels of stress, demanding work conditions, and limited career advancement opportunities without further education. Expanding the existing scholarship program to include correctional officers acknowledges their service and provides them with a valuable resource to pursue higher education and training.

SB 690 aligns with Maryland's commitment to strengthen its public safety workforce by offering tuition assistance to those seeking to enter or advance within the field. By extending scholarships to correctional officers, the state can help attract and retain qualified individuals who are dedicated to maintaining safety and security in our correctional institutions. Moreover, higher education opportunities will enable these professionals to develop leadership skills, improve rehabilitation efforts, and contribute to evidence-based practices within the correctional system.

SB 690 is an investment in the education, training, and retention of Maryland's correctional officers. Their work is essential to public safety, and this legislation will help ensure they receive the support they need to succeed in their critical roles. Thank you.

