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POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: HB 0289 Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services -

Incarcerated Individual Apprenticeship Program

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: 01/24/2025

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on House Bill 0289.

My name is Terri Collins-Green and I am the Director of Social Work. Poverty and incarceration are strongly correlated. The Prison Policy Initiative found pre-incarceration incomes of incarcerated individuals, "... in 2014 dollars, incarcerated people had a median annual income of \$19,185 prior to their incarceration, which is 41% less than non-incarcerated people of similar ages." The Maryland Office of the Public Defender (MOPD) provides client centered representation to indigent citizens charged with crimes. One of the goals of client centered representation includes Social workers and Peer Recovery specialists employed at MOPD, whose goal is to connect indigent citizens with needed resources to enhance job opportunities. Access to apprenticeships to incarcerated individuals will serve to enhance and increase job opportunities, economic upward mobility and encourage personal growth and development for returning citizens.

The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Corrections cites one of their goals as "A commitment to returning offenders to society with the tools necessary to keep them from their former life of crime is evident in the vast array of job skill opportunities, educational programming, psychological and health sessions, and drug treatment." (<https://www.dpscs.state.md.us/corrections/>). This commitment connotes that rehabilitation is the underlying purpose of incarceration. Similarly, according to penal philosophy, there are three

prevailing goals of imprisonment: the goal of punishing wrongdoers for the sake of retribution, the goal of incapacitating those convicted of crimes and keeping the public safe, and the goal of rehabilitating wrongdoers to help them re-enter society. (Perricone, Baskin-Sommers & Ahn. 2022). Rehabilitation is the process of changing unwanted behaviors by some intervention. To provide the best and most effective intervention, we must recognize that changing unwanted behaviors necessitates personal growth and development. Providing apprenticeship opportunities ensures such development, and furthers the restoration and enhancement of law-abiding citizenry. By providing skill-building opportunities, enhancing workforce readiness, and educating incarcerated individuals, House Bill 289 makes our prisons better at rehabilitation and will make communities safer.

In 2022, Bill Keller, founding editor-in-chief of the Marshall Project, a nonprofit news organization that covers criminal justice in the United States, published his book entitled, *What's Prison For? Punishment and Rehabilitation in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, which cites a quote from a 2021 report in the Journal of Crime and Justice, "Prisons are unlikely to reduce reoffending unless they can be transformed into people-changing institutions." Affording apprenticeships to incarcerated individuals is a small step in the right direction to ensuring we are positively changing the lives of those incarcerated in Maryland's prisons.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 0289.

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