

Higher Education Oral Speech

Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

My name is Thomas Anderson, and I am here today in support of expanding access to higher education for incarcerated students in Maryland.

I speak to you today as the Executive Director of Manumission House, a minister at Zion Baptist Church, and as someone whose life was transformed by higher education in prison.

I spent 22 and a half years incarcerated, While I was inside, I had the opportunity to begin my college education. That experience changed the trajectory of my life.

Education in prison does something powerful. It restores hope, it builds discipline, and it helps people begin to see themselves as citizens capable of contributing to society rather than returning to prison.

Since coming home in 2019, the education I began while incarcerated helped me rebuild my life. Today I hold a bachelor's degree from the University of Baltimore, I am working toward my master's degree, and I now lead an organization that supports justice-impacted individuals pursuing higher education and stability.

The research is clear. Individuals who participate in higher education while incarcerated are significantly less likely to return to prison, more likely to find employment, support their families, and their communities.

Notwithstanding, when incarcerated parents earn college credits, their children are far more likely to pursue college themselves, helping break the cycle of incarceration across generations.

Passing this bill would allow Maryland to join other states investing in education as a pathway to rehabilitation, public safety, and opportunity.

Because:

When we invest in education inside prison, we invest in safer communities outside of prison.

I respectfully urge you to vote favorably on HB1311 and HB1313.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thomas Anderson