

**Testimony for House Bill 1313 Higher Education – Tuition Exemption – Incarcerated
Individuals**

By Stephen J. Steurer, PhD, Chair, Prison Education Delivery System Commission

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Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee please accept my wholehearted support for HB0612 sponsored by Embry, Pasteur and Taveras. Currently, I am the Chair of the Governor's Prison Education Delivery System Reform Commission and have been working very closely with Delegate Pasteur during the past year on issues related to the education of incarcerated individuals. Because the Commission has been advised by the Governor not to get directly involved with sponsoring bills, my testimony today does not represent the opinion of the Commission per se. The Commission, however, has created more than 15 recommendations to the Governor and Legislature which are reflected in HB0612.

My support is based on more than 50 years working in criminal justice as a teacher, educational and correctional administrator and professor in Maryland and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. In 2014 the RAND Corporation published the definitive research study which proved that education reduces future crime significantly, returning several times the original investment in reduced criminal justice expenses. Prisoners who study post-secondary education recidivate at the lowest levels of all. Currently, Pell grants pay most of the tuition costs for incarcerated individuals. This bill would only pay the difference between the total cost and what Pell grants allow.

In summary, my professional experience and action research have taught me the value that correctional education provides in the rehabilitative process. Research has shown that educational achievement is the most effective tool generally available for crime reduction and public safety. I urge the members of this Committee to support HB1313.