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## Letter of Support for HB1311

March 9, 2026

Dear Members of the House Committee,

I am writing to express my personal support for **Maryland House Bill 1311**, which would expand access to student financial assistance for incarcerated individuals pursuing higher education. I have taught and volunteered in prison settings for several years, facilitating courses that bring together reading, dialogue, and peacebuilding practice. In these classrooms, I have seen individuals who had long been defined only by their incarceration begin to rediscover their intellectual curiosity and their capacity to contribute meaningfully to the lives of others.

In one course, after reading historical accounts of truth commissions, my students wrote college-level assignments that included thoughtful reflections on responsibility, remorse, reconciliation, and reparations—the “four Rs.” In the discussion that followed, several students shared that it was the first time they felt that their voices and ideas mattered in a constructive way. Moments like this illustrate how education can transform not only individuals, but the culture within correctional facilities themselves. It is also important to remember that **more than 95% of people who are incarcerated will eventually return to our communities**. Evidence consistently shows that when individuals have access to college education while incarcerated, **recidivism rates drop significantly**, helping people return home better prepared to contribute positively to society and making communities safer.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage the committee to give HB1311 a favorable report. Expanding financial assistance for incarcerated students affirms that education is a powerful pathway toward accountability, growth, successful reentry, and safer communities across Maryland.

Sincerely,  
Lucy Kiekebusch-Steinitz