



March 25, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes,
Chair, Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 285 — Higher Education – Scholarships for Correctional Officers. This legislation expands existing State scholarship programs for public safety professionals to include correctional officers, recognizing their essential role in maintaining public safety and supporting community stability

SB 285 would amend current law to make correctional officers eligible for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program. By extending these important financial incentives to correctional officers, the State strengthens recruitment and retention in a field that is critical to the safety and well-being of Maryland communities.

Public safety personnel, including correctional officers, serve on the front lines of justice and rehabilitation, often under challenging conditions. Access to scholarship support can lower barriers to entering and remaining in these careers, ultimately contributing to a more effective and stable public safety workforce.

MHEC supports the intent of SB 285 and appreciates the opportunity to expand access to the existing scholarship for correctional officers. To ensure successful implementation, the Commission notes the following considerations:

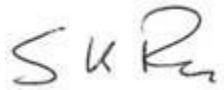
- Effective and timely implementation will benefit from additional staffing and system resources to support expanded eligibility, maintain program integrity, and ensure accurate and equitable award administration.
- Expanding eligibility to include an additional career pathway increases the number of individuals who may apply for the existing scholarship. While SB 285 does not increase

the total funding available for the scholarship, expanding eligibility may increase demand and competition within the existing funding structure.

These considerations are provided to facilitate a smooth implementation and to maintain efficient, transparent program administration for all eligible applicants, without resulting in long-term fiscal operating costs.

For these reasons, the Maryland Higher Education Commission respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 285. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meghan Music, Executive Director of External and Legislative Relations.

Yours in Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S K Rai".

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Secretary

Maryland Higher Education Commission