



**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**House Bill 1313**  
**Higher Education - Tuition Exemption - Incarcerated Individuals**  
**March 11, 2026**  
**Information**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 1313. The bill would exempt incarcerated individuals, under certain conditions, from paying tuition at public institutions of higher education. The bill also seeks to expand educational access by allowing eligible incarcerated learners to enroll in credit-bearing and noncredit coursework without absorbing tuition costs, with financial aid applied first and any remaining balance covered through the exemption.

The University System of Maryland (USM) is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The USM deeply affirms the rehabilitative value of higher education – particularly for justice-involved learners – and recognizes that House Bill 1313 aligns with Maryland's broader expansion of prison education opportunities. At the same time, the bill carries significant fiscal considerations for our institutions. Unlike other recent legislation that facilitates financial aid access ([House Bill 1311](#)), House Bill 1313's tuition exemption places the remaining financial responsibility squarely on institutions once all applicable aid is exhausted.

Across the USM, the magnitude of these impacts vary. At Bowie State University (BSU), for example, institutional leaders report that the university would be responsible for filling any financial gaps for these students, requiring close coordination among financial aid, finance, student accounts, and philanthropy to identify funding sources. Without designated state support, BSU anticipates that institutional funds would need to cover unmet tuition balances for incarcerated learners participating under the exemption.

At UMBC, the projected direct impact is smaller in scale but still meaningful. Historically, enrollment from this population does not exceed five undergraduate students per semester. Using the current in-state tuition and mandatory fee rate of \$6,839.50 per student, UMBC estimates a tuition-and-fee revenue loss of approximately \$34,197.50 per semester, or \$68,395 annually, should the exemption be applied without offsetting funding.

At University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), the fiscal exposure is potentially more substantial. UMES does not participate in Second Chance Pell, meaning that state or federal financial aid may not fully cover tuition and fees for eligible students. In the absence of a clearly defined reimbursement mechanism – such as through the Maryland Higher Education Commission – UMES anticipates considerable financial implications, particularly if enrollment grows. Moreover, if the legislation does not set enrollment caps or participation limits, UMES may face difficulty forecasting demand, managing risk, and sustainably integrating these costs into long-term budget models.

Taken together, these examples underscore the dual reality of House Bill 1313: the bill's intention – to expand access to transformative educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals – is one the USM strongly supports. Yet the bill's structure, in its current form, shifts substantial financial responsibility to institutions without establishing a parallel funding mechanism, a reimbursement process, or constraints that would allow for predictable fiscal planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information, and for your thoughtful consideration of the operational and fiscal realities faced by Maryland's public universities as they work to support the state's broader goals for justice-involved learners.

