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Education, Energy, and
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Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The House Appropriations Committee

SB 285 – Higher Education – Scholarships for Correctional Officers
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the distinguished House Appropriations Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 285 – Higher Education – Scholarships for Correctional Officers. The House crossfile, House Bill 852, passed the House of Delegates on March 18 by a 132-1 vote.

The Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program provides tuition assistance to Maryland residents enrolled in degree programs that further a career in law enforcement or community supervision, and SB 285 would expand the program to include correctional officers. SB 285 has been amended to reflect the HB 852 amendments, which clarify that the certificate programs also qualify.

By way of background, this Scholarship Program was originally created as a result of research that showed higher education for public safety officers is beneficial to more than just the officer, as public safety officers who are college graduates are less likely to be the subject of citizen complaints. Higher education enables professionals to develop leadership skills, improve rehabilitation efforts, and contribute to evidence-based practices within our public safety system.

The best ideas for legislation come from the front lines of our constituents, and that was the case when Shytina Drummond, Assistant Warden of the Worcester County Jail and member of the Maryland Correctional Administrators Association Legislative Committee, shared with me this recommendation to expand the eligibility of the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program to include Correctional Officers. In her testimony before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Assistant Warden Drummond stated:

“This is an opportunity that can significantly impact all Maryland correctional officers. Just like probation agents and police officers, we must also recognize the vital contributions of correctional officers. By closing the gap, we can create a more cohesive and competent Public Safety community. Education is not just about personal growth. It is essential for effectively managing our correctional facilities. Offering tuition reimbursement through this scholarship program to correctional officers will empower them to develop professionally, which can increase public trust and safety in the correctional system. Fostering career development leads to higher job satisfaction, increases morale, and retention. This program would be a recruitment incentive, which can be promoted to attract new hires for our correctional facilities. Investing in

the education of correctional officers will let them know that they are appreciated and that their work is valued.

Furthering their education not only benefits correctional officers personally, but it also positively impacts the incarcerated individuals they work with. Better educated correctional officers leads to improved public safety and lower recidivism rates, which ultimately strengthens our communities. Together we can pave the way for a better educated, more effective, and more inclusive corrections workforce.”

The shortage of public safety professionals, including correctional officers, continues to be a challenge across the State of Maryland, and in my district, I have worked with the leadership of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and Eastern Correctional Institute (ECI) to increase the number of Correctional Officers, thereby increasing the safety of the facility and overall community.

By extending these important financial incentives to correctional officers, we can strengthen recruitment and retention in a field that is critical to the safety and well-being of Maryland communities, as correctional officers are an integral part of Maryland’s public safety network. This bill is supported by the Maryland Association of Counties, Maryland Correctional Administrators Association, Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, and Wor-Wic Community College.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable and very swift report on SB 285.