

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Working together for a criminal justice system that better serves our communities



Testimony in Support of House Bill 1311 Higher Education – Student Financial Assistance for Incarcerated Individuals – Alterations

On behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR)

Before the House Appropriations Committee
Hearing 3.11.26 at 1pm

March 9, 2026

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) submits this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1311: Higher Education – Student Financial Assistance for Incarcerated Individuals – Alterations.

MAJR is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2,000 Marylanders who advocate for evidence-based legislative and policy reforms to Maryland’s correctional system.

HB 1311 recognizes that education and workforce training are among the most effective tools for reducing recidivism, supporting successful reentry, and promoting long-term public safety. This bill would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to help incarcerated individuals obtain student financial assistance—both federal Pell Grants and State Student Financial Assistance.

I have been teaching in the Second Chance Pell Grant Program at Jessup Correctional Institution (and other prisons) for ten years and have seen the overwhelming benefits of higher education to people who are incarcerated. (I also serve on two committees of the PEDRC.) Those in the programs are typically highly motivated people who have overcome adversity and work very hard to grow and ready themselves for a productive life in the community when they are released.

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, Inc.

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HB 1311 is one of the recommendations put forward by the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission (PEDRC), created in 2024 by the Maryland Legislature to improve correctional education and occupational training. MAJR strongly recommends that the House Appropriations Committee give it a favorable report.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Judith Lichtenberg
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