

Gordon Pack

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HB 1313 – Higher Education – Tuition Exemption – Incarcerated Individuals – Favorable – March 9, 2026

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am a justice impacted appointee of the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission. Most of my formal education was acquired behind the walls. I received my GED at the Baltimore City Detention Center at 16. I enrolled in the Coppin State University at the Penitentiary at 17 before getting transferred. I enrolled in the Baltimore City Community College at Patuxent at 21. I would go on to enroll in Morgan State University at Patuxent at 23. Now, I find myself serving Maryland by working on a Commission researching, reporting, and making recommendations to improve an educational system which helped reform my life.

Prior to the suspension of Pell Grants for prisoners, Maryland had Higher Education Extension Programs at every maximum and medium prison facility. Incarcerated individuals had the opportunity to earn college degrees and occupational trades which data shows reduces recidivism. Incarcerated individuals once returned to the broader community equipped with certification to obtain gainful employment despite a criminal record.

While Pell Grant funding has been restored for this disadvantaged class, such grants do not cover the registration costs for students. This can result in incarcerated individuals leaving prisons with additional financial debts and, possibly, not being able to pursue a degree. While larger colleges and universities can solicit donations to cover these cost, smaller institutions do not have such luxuries.

HB1313 would remedy this problem and enable more incarcerated individuals to pursue higher education. I wholeheartedly support this proposed legislation and urge a favorable vote.

Sincerely yours,

/s/Gordon R. Pack