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Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FAV

House Appropriations Committee

March 25, 2026

SB 285 - Higher Education - Scholarships for Correctional Officers**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **SB 285**. This bill expands eligibility for the existing Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program to include correctional officers and renames the program accordingly, allowing correctional officers to access the same tuition assistance and service obligation structure already in place for similarly situated public safety professionals.

Maryland's community colleges play a central role in educating and training the State's public safety workforce, including individuals pursuing careers in corrections, law enforcement, and probation and parole services. Extending scholarship eligibility to correctional officers recognizes the important role they play in maintaining public safety and provides meaningful educational support for individuals seeking to enter or advance within this critical field.

SB 285 builds on an existing and well-established scholarship framework rather than creating a new program, ensuring that correctional officers are held to the same eligibility and service requirements as current participants. By broadening access to this program in a targeted and responsible manner, the bill strengthens Maryland's public safety workforce pipeline while promoting educational opportunity and career advancement. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB 285**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

SB 285 - Senator Carozza - House_FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

MARY BETH CAROZZA
Legislative District 38
Somerset, Wicomico,
and Worcester Counties

Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 25, 2026

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.

SB 285_ HB 852 FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Music

Position: FAV



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:

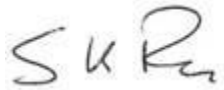
- Effective and timely implementation will benefit from additional staffing and system resources to support expanded eligibility, maintain program integrity, and ensure accurate and equitable award administration.
- Expanding eligibility to include an additional career pathway increases the number of 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 black ink, appearing to read "S K Rai". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Secretary

Maryland Higher Education Commission

SB0285-APP_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Sample

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 285

Higher Education - Scholarships for Correctional Officers

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: March 25, 2026

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 285. This bill expands eligibility for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program to include correctional officers.

SB 285 extends higher education resources, currently limited to law enforcement, to include detention center officers. There is a great deal of crossover between the corrections and law enforcement workforces, which is why considering their needs together will make them both stronger independent entities. The adjustments represent an opportunity for local governments to build and sustain a qualified and enthusiastic workforce of employees while incentivizing their professional development and career longevity.

Broadening eligibility for funding from scholarship programs to include local correctional officers sends an important message about how much governments and communities value these roles. As the rehabilitative arm of the justice system, corrections officers look out for and care for some of Maryland's most vulnerable populations. Prioritizing professional development and continued education has the potential to increase the pool of candidates looking to join this vital work force. Additionally, the skills and knowledge acquired through post-secondary education can have a substantial influence on the quality of work performed and services provided in detention centers. There is no question this can have a significant impact on successful reentry and recidivism rates for returning citizens.

MACo commends the expansion of eligibility to corrections officers for these opportunities that promote continual growth and improvement. This is paramount to ensuring employees see a fulfilling future for themselves in these critical public safety roles. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 285.