



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

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HB0194 - Incarcerated Job Training Act - FWA (Support in Concept)

I have served as a member of several collaborative workgroups alongside State and community partners and through that work have researched this issue. Creation of a pathway for incarcerated individuals to take advantage of occupational training, then transition into Work Release apprenticeships and community jobs upon release is a universal recommendation. This bill lifts up an important, current and relevant issue, but has technical problems that will increase the operational costs and would likely make implementation unsuccessful.

HB0194 as written creates a new Subtitle 9 in Correctional Services Title 3 as a parallel Work Release system for apprenticeships with a separate financial structure, extra costs to employers and the State and more burdensome accounting requirements. This financial plan is detailed in proposed § 3-904 where the employer is required to pay at least minimum wage and § 3-905 where they must additionally and separately pay monthly housing/transportation fees to DPSCS. Because employers do not shoulder the housing and transportation costs of community hires, this means they would pay more to hire an incarcerated individual than a community member. It then burdens DPSCS and Labor with creating a separate program structure.

Subtitle 8 already covers all Leave for incarcerated individuals, including Work Release, and would be proper placement for this program. There is an existing, functional structure for housing and transportation within § 3-803 and § 3-804 that is already in regulation and policy and is in use for Work Release programs of all kinds, as listed in § 3-801 (b). Also, Work Release is already approved for diminution credits under § 3-806. This makes proposed § 3-906 and § 3-908 duplications as well, although these are harmless. Since the Apprenticeship Program is a trade-focused Work Release program, it would make financial and logistical sense to use the tried and true Work Release infrastructure to accomplish this enhanced goal.

It is my hope that this important bill can be relocated to Subtitle 8, establishing the program within § 3-801, removing the duplications, and providing the specific details in proposed § 3-903 and § 3-907 under a new § 3-812 or that a similarly functional drafting can be created through collaboration with DPSCS, Labor and interested community organizations. Connection of incarcerated individuals to skilled, living wage jobs is a pillar of successful reentry, and it is worth the time and investment to work through these concerns and implement this program.

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