



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 19th 2026

HB612

Correctional Education and Workforce Skills Training Programs - State Correctional Ombudsman and Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training Program for Incarcerated Individuals

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 612**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 612 enhances Maryland's correctional education and workforce development system by requiring the Director of Education and Workforce Skills Training for Correctional Institutions to consult with the State Correctional Ombudsman to ensure the effective operation, accountability, and quality of educational and vocational programs offered in adult correctional facilities. Additionally, the bill establishes the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training Program for Incarcerated Individuals under the Maryland Department of Labor. Beginning in fiscal year 2028 and thereafter, the Governor would be authorized to allocate sufficient funding annually to support the program's implementation and long-term sustainability.

This policy strengthens rehabilitation pathways, reduce recidivism, and prepare incarcerated individuals for stable employment and community reintegration upon release. By expanding access to meaningful education, workforce training, and peer recovery certification, the State invests in evidence-based strategies that improve public safety, address behavioral health needs, and create economic opportunities. These programs also benefit Maryland's workforce and communities by increasing the number of skilled workers, reducing long-term correctional costs, and supporting individuals as they rebuild their lives.

House Bill 612 reflects the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and the preferential option for those who are vulnerable. The Catholic tradition affirms that every person—regardless of past mistakes—possesses inherent dignity and the capacity for transformation. Providing educational opportunities and recovery support honors the belief that rehabilitation, not despair, should guide our response to incarceration. By equipping individuals with tools to heal, contribute, and reconnect with their families, the State helps restore the dignity of those on the margins and strengthens the well-being of the broader community.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 612**.