



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

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HB0194 - Incarcerated Individual Apprenticeship Pilot Program - FAVORABLE

I have served as a member of several collaborative workgroups as an impacted individual alongside State and community partners researching how to connect Incarcerated Individuals (IIs) to stable, living wage work. Through this collaboration I've found that many of the resources to create a continuous path from training to apprenticeship to community employment already exist, they are just not effectively organized because they cut across several silos. HB0194 is a pilot program that would organize these existing resources with minimal fiscal impact, break the silos and maximize the benefit of occupational training behind the walls. Piloting in Baltimore would allow for program development in a job-rich environment to prepare for scaling into more rural regions of the state.

Currently, the Maryland Department of Labor Correctional Education (CE) provides a range of Occupational Programming in correctional facilities across Maryland. CE does a career assessment, helps the II choose the right program, and enrolls the II in job training, often with a real world certification at the end. When the II is within 18 months of release, they are able to participate in the Work Release program. It would make sense for them to be placed into a job in the field they trained for, but this is not what currently occurs. The Work Release program is conducted through DPSCS Case Management, who is tasked with placing everyone, not just CE graduates, therefore Work Release jobs tend to be unskilled work such as fast food and recycling labor that almost any II could do. The opportunity to connect CE graduates to the trade apprenticeships they trained for is missed.

Although Labor attempts to reconnect individuals to their trade after the fact through Transition Coordinators 9 months pre-release and Reentry Navigators in the community, it is often too late. Reentry is an overwhelming time with many competing priorities and it can be easier for the individual to remain in the job they have while they weather the storm. As more time passes between CE training and field entry, memories fade, certifications expire, and the individual is eventually no longer able to directly enter the field without refresher training and recertification. Thus our training investment is lost. HB0194 closes this gap by seizing the opportunity at the Work Release contact point to appropriately place the II into trade employment. They can then continue this job during reentry and begin tracking toward long-term career advancement. This is a far better outcome for a very small investment, and I urge a favorable report.

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