

Favorable - HB 194 – Incarcerated Individual Apprenticeship Pilot Program

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM
Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



TO: Chair Will Smith and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Phil Caroom, MAJR Executive Committee
DATE: March 26, 2026

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR - www.ma4jr.org) urges support for HB 194, the Incarcerated Individual Apprenticeship Pilot Program, as an important initiative to provide much-needed job training and employment opportunities for Marylanders seeking to leave their past criminal involvement behind.

Why is employment important for incarcerated Marylanders? Studies show that employment reduces recidivism and, thus, promotes public safety. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that “those who are unable to maintain employment experience a recidivism rate of 52% over three years, whereas their peers who maintain employment for one year post-release experienced a recidivism rate of just 16%.”

Employers also would benefit given our workforce reductions due to immigration enforcement.

Legislators should take note that this Apprenticeship program would not duplicate the function of Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE). The bill specifies that this program would not be part of MCE. Importantly, legislators also should recall that MCE is a small program – and offers employment training / work to only about 10% of all individuals incarcerated in Maryland’s Division of Correction.

So, other training and employment is needed by the remaining 90% of incarcerated Marylanders. MCE limits participation to just those incarcerated individuals who have GEDs or other diplomas. The Apprenticeship program doesn’t compel this restriction, so it potentially also might assist individuals who could learn and gain experience with less-skilled trades.

The proposed Apprenticeship pilot also would be located at the Baltimore City Correctional Center where the need for employment is especially high.

Finally, Legislators should note that the Apprenticeship program has been rated as having only a “minimal increase” in costs for state agencies that might choose to take on apprentices via this program.

While not a panacea, HB 194– the Incarcerated Individual Apprenticeship Pilot Program– is an excellent addition to our toolbelt for providing lawful employment to Marylanders seeking to leave criminal involvement behind.

PLEASE NOTE: Phil Caroom files this testimony for MAJR and not for the Md. Judiciary or any other unit of state government.