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**HB 0194**

March 26, 2026

**TO:** Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations  
**RE:** House Bill 194 – Incarcerated Job Training Act

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 194.

HB 194 would establish a much-needed apprenticeship program for incarcerated individuals within the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS).

Approximately 2,000 Baltimoreans return from prison each year. According to the Justice Policy Institute, Baltimoreans are disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration – representing 40 percent of the state's prison population despite being home to just 9 percent of Maryland's overall population.<sup>1</sup>

The City of Baltimore previously implemented a pilot employment program for incarcerated Baltimoreans preparing to return home entitled Returning Citizens Behind the Wall (RCBTW) using \$986,400 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. This program connected eligible inmates with employment in partnership City agencies and various community-based re-entry organizations with meaningful \$15/hour employment, skills training, and wraparound supports ahead of their release from incarceration. This initiative supported 199 people preparing to return home to Baltimore. At time of release, 80 percent of participants received at least \$10,000 in accumulated wages to support them on the next phase of their journey.

With the end of this pilot program at the conclusion of ARPA funding, there is a clear opportunity for the State to step in and establish similar programming that connects people who are

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<sup>1</sup><https://justicepolicy.org/press/baltimore-city-black-communities-in-maryland-disproportionately-harmed-by-alarming-rates-of-incarceration/>

incarcerated with apprenticeship opportunities. Consistent with national models, Maryland's recidivism is highest in the first year following release. Measurement of first year recidivism changed due to pending resolution of cases, and is currently 19.44%. Pre-release employment and skills training is an essential part of ensuring people currently incarcerated in State facilities are able to successfully re-enter society. This proposal would help prevent recidivism, facilitate the development of in-demand trade skills, fill important roles in the job market and local government to grow our regional economy, and appropriately compensate participants for their labor. Simply put, when incarcerated individuals are able to return home with the skills they need to succeed and on solid financial footing, it will help drive down recidivism rates across Maryland.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 194.