

SB0285_MACC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FAV

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 4, 2026

SB 285 - Higher Education - Scholarships for Correctional Officers**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **SB 285**. This bill expands eligibility for the existing Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program to include correctional officers and renames the program accordingly, allowing correctional officers to access the same tuition assistance and service obligation structure already in place for similarly situated public safety professionals.

Maryland's community colleges play a central role in educating and training the State's public safety workforce, including individuals pursuing careers in corrections, law enforcement, and probation and parole services. Extending scholarship eligibility to correctional officers recognizes the important role they play in maintaining public safety and provides meaningful educational support for individuals seeking to enter or advance within this critical field.

SB 285 builds on an existing and well-established scholarship framework rather than creating a new program, ensuring that correctional officers are held to the same eligibility and service requirements as current participants. By broadening access to this program in a targeted and responsible manner, the bill strengthens Maryland's public safety workforce pipeline while promoting educational opportunity and career advancement. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB 285**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

MCAA SB 285 Higher Education - Scholarships for Co

Uploaded by: Mary Ann Thompson

Position: FAV



SB 285 – Higher Education – Scholarships for Correctional Officers

MCAA Position: **SUPPORT**

TO: Judicial Proceedings and Education,
Energy and the Environment
Committee

DATE: January 30, 2026

FROM: Christopher Klein, President
Lamonte Cooke, Legislative Committee
Mary Ann Thompson, Legislative Committee

The Maryland Correctional Administrator's Association (MCAA), an organization comprised of our statewide jail wardens and administrators dedicated to correctional best practices, **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 285**, which will include Correctional Officers in the Education Article, Subtitle 38, Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Programs.

The Maryland Correctional Administrator's Association (MCAA) believes that education enhances correctional officers' leadership skills, which is vital for effective management and positive change within our facilities.

The MCAA strongly urges the committee to issue a **favorable report on Senate Bill 285**, highlighting its significance for correctional officers' educational opportunities.

SB 285 - Sen Carozza Testimony_FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

MARY BETH CAROZZA
Legislative District 38
Somerset, Wicomico,
and Worcester Counties

Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 4, 2025

The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 285 – Higher Education – Scholarships for Correctional Officers
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the distinguished Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 285 – Higher Education – Scholarships for Correctional Officers.

The shortage of public safety professionals, including correctional officers, continues to be a challenge across the State of Maryland, and in my district, I have worked with the leadership of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and Eastern Correctional Institute (ECI) to increase the number of Correctional Officers which increases the safety of the facility and overall community.

Over the years as we have focused on recruitment and retention of COs at ECI and the county detention facilities, we look for opportunities to ensure that Correctional Officers are on par with the opportunities of other public safety professionals, and that is the intention of Senate Bill 285.

The Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program provides tuition assistance to Maryland residents enrolled in degree programs that further a career in law enforcement or community supervision, and SB 285 would expand the program to include correctional officers.

The best ideas for legislation come from the front lines of our constituents, and that was the case when Shytina Drummond, Assistant Warden of the Worcester County Jail and member of the Maryland Correctional Administrators Association Legislative Committee, shared with me this recommendation to expand the eligibility of the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program to include Correctional Officers. As she will discuss in her testimony, this legislation would provide a tool for the recruitment and retention of correctional officers, and would boost morale for current correctional officers.

House Bill 670, the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, established the Maryland Police Officers Scholarship Program, which was then expanded by House Bill 982 of 2023 to include Probation Agents. Senate Bill 1101 of 2024, sponsored by Chair Smith, allowed these scholarships to be used at community colleges in addition to four-year institutions. This Scholarship Program was originally created as a result of research that showed higher education for public safety officers is beneficial to more than just the officer, as public safety officers who

are college graduates are less likely to be the subject of citizen complaints. Higher education enables professionals to develop leadership skills, improve rehabilitation efforts, and contribute to evidence-based practices within the correctional system.

As of August 2025, DPSCS had approximately 848 vacancies across 9,229 positions for a department-wide vacancy rate of 9.2 percent. Correctional officer vacancies remain an ongoing issue for the department. DPSCS has approximately 474 vacancies out of 5,192 correctional officer positions, which is a 9.1 percent vacancy rate. The number of correctional officer positions filled has remained relatively flat over the past year. In August 2024, there were approximately 4,772 correctional officer positions that were filled and a year later, in August 2025, there were 4,718 correctional officer positions that were filled. A growing correctional facility population combined with the stagnated number of correctional officers has led to increased workloads, overtime hours, and attrition.

By extending these important financial incentives to correctional officers, we can strengthen recruitment and retention in a field that is critical to the safety and well-being of Maryland communities, as correctional officers are an integral part of Maryland's public safety network.

Public safety personnel, including correctional officers, serve on the front lines of justice and rehabilitation, often under challenging conditions, and with limited career advancement opportunities without further education. Offering this education incentive can lower barriers to entering and remaining in these careers, ultimately contributing to a more effective and stable public safety workforce.

This bill is supported by the Maryland Correctional Administrators Association, Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, and Wor-Wic Community College.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable and very swift report on SB 285.

SB 285 FAV MHEC.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Music

Position: FAV



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February 4, 2026

The Honorable Will Smith, Chair,
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Education,
Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 285 — Higher Education – Scholarships for Correctional Officers, sponsored by Senator Carozza. This legislation expands existing State scholarship programs for public safety professionals to include correctional officers, recognizing their essential role in maintaining public safety and supporting community stability

SB285 would amend current law to make correctional officers eligible for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program. By extending these important financial incentives to correctional officers, the State strengthens recruitment and retention in a field that is critical to the safety and well-being of Maryland communities.

Public safety personnel, including correctional officers, serve on the front lines of justice and rehabilitation, often under challenging conditions. Access to scholarship support can lower barriers to entering and remaining in these careers, ultimately contributing to a more effective and stable public safety workforce.

MHEC supports the intent of SB 285 and appreciates the opportunity to expand access to the existing scholarship for correctional officers. To ensure successful implementation, the Commission notes the following considerations:

- Effective and timely implementation will benefit from additional staffing and system resources to support expanded eligibility, maintain program integrity, and ensure accurate and equitable award administration.
- Expanding eligibility to include an additional career pathway increases the number of individuals who may apply for the existing scholarship. While SB 285 does not increase the total funding available for the scholarship, expanding eligibility may increase demand and competition within the existing funding structure.

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These considerations are provided to facilitate a smooth implementation and to maintain efficient, transparent program administration for all eligible applicants, without resulting in long-term fiscal operating costs.

For these reasons, the Maryland Higher Education Commission respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 285. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meghan Music, Executive Director of External and Legislative Relations.

Yours in Service,

Handwritten signature of Sanjay Rai in blue ink.

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.
Secretary
Maryland Higher Education Commission

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Senate Bill 285 - Wor-Wic Community College - Lett

Uploaded by: Molly O'Hara

Position: FAV

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Deborah Casey, Ph.D.

February 2, 2026

Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland General Assembly

Dear Chair Smith and Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Wor-Wic Community College, I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 285-Higher Education-Scholarships for Correctional Officers.

For more than three decades, Wor-Wic Community College has proudly served Maryland's public safety workforce through comprehensive education and training for both law enforcement and correctional professionals. Our Criminal Justice degree programs and the Eastern Shore Criminal Justice Academy provide college-credit pathways, professional certifications, and workforce training that prepare individuals for meaningful careers while strengthening public safety throughout our region.

Senate Bill 285 represents an important and timely investment in correctional officers by expanding eligibility for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship to include this essential segment of the public safety workforce. Correctional officers play a critical role in community safety, rehabilitation, and reentry, yet many face significant financial barriers when pursuing higher education. This legislation would help remove those barriers by providing tuition assistance to Maryland residents enrolled in degree programs that support careers in corrections, law enforcement, and community supervision.

Wor-Wic Community College currently offers a Corrections Certificate, along with related Criminal Justice programs, designed to enhance professional skills, promote career advancement, and improve retention within the corrections field. Passage of SB 285 would directly benefit our students who are working by making higher education more accessible and attainable. In turn, this investment will strengthen Maryland's correctional system by fostering a more educated, prepared, and resilient workforce.

We commend Senator Carozza for introducing this legislation and respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 285. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Maryland's public safety professionals.

Sincerely,



Deborah Casey, Ph.D.

President

Wor-Wic Community College

SB285

Uploaded by: Virginia White

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 285

Higher Education - Scholarships for Correctional Officers

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings and Education,
Energy, and the Environment Committees

Date: February 4, 2026

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 285. This bill expands eligibility for the Maryland Police Officers and Probation Agents Scholarship Program to include correctional officers.

SB 285 extends higher education resources, currently limited to law enforcement, to include detention center officers. There is a great deal of crossover between the corrections and law enforcement workforces, which is why considering their needs together will make them both stronger independent entities. The adjustments represent an opportunity for local governments to build and sustain a qualified and enthusiastic workforce of employees while incentivizing their professional development and career longevity.

Broadening eligibility for funding from scholarship programs to include local correctional officers sends an important message about how much governments and communities value these roles. As the rehabilitative arm of the justice system, corrections officers look out for and care for some of Maryland's most vulnerable populations. Prioritizing professional development and continued education has the potential to increase the pool of candidates looking to join this vital work force. Additionally, the skills and knowledge acquired through post-secondary education can have a substantial influence on the quality of work performed and services provided in detention centers. There is no question this can have a significant impact on successful reentry and recidivism rates for returning citizens.

MACo commends the expansion of eligibility to corrections officers for these opportunities that promote continual growth and improvement. This is paramount to ensuring employees see a fulfilling future for themselves in these critical public safety roles. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 285.