

Testimony on HB0438 Adult Schol Board Model Development Committee

By Stephen J. Steurer, PhD, Chair, Prison Education

Delivery System Reform Commission

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Members of the House Ways and Means and Government, Labor, and Elections Committees, please accept my wholehearted support for HB0108 sponsored by Delegate Pasteur and well over 20 other of her colleagues. As Chair of the Prison Education Delivery System Reform Commission, I support the bill because the Commission has already recommended that a school board/school district model be studied this year to come up with a better delivery model for Maryland.

The purpose of the Commission is to reform the way education is currently being delivered in Maryland's adult prisons. It was created by the Legislature because there was great dissatisfaction with the current educational and workforce outcomes. Hence, the Legislature created the Commission to fix it by coming up with something better.

During the last year the members of the Commission requested and studied data from the Departments of Public Safety and Correctional Services and Labor. There were six prison visits and numerous Zoom meetings to discuss issues and solutions. In late November the first annual report was turned in to the Governor's office and one of the recommendations was to conduct research to study the best delivery models around the country. Delegates Pasteur, Embry and Simpson have been involved in all the visits and discussions.

My only concern with HB9438 is that the Committee works closely with and not separately from the Commission. We have already contacted every state to obtain legislation and organizational charts and data to show effectiveness of various models. We should avoid producing two separate reports, one from the Commission and one from the Committee. I suggest that Committee proposed by HB0438 become the 4th Stakeholder Committee of the Commission.

This is important legislation because the lack of education and job preparation among so many citizens affects the safety and progress of all Maryland citizens. Research by the RAND Corporation has proven education and job preparation reduces recidivism significantly. The resulting reduction in crime returns savings to the state several times the cost of educational programs.

Thank you and I urge you to support HB0438.

