



Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2026 | 10am-11am

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/>

Attendance: Dr. Stephen Steurer, Pat Hruz, Riley Donahue, John Feaster III, Richard Gibson, Gordon Pack, Ian Genove, Dr. Judith Lichtenberg, Lucy Steinitz, Dr. Michael Wilson, Dr. David Pinder, Christian Gant, Deena Hausner, Mary Gable, Ainsley Moench, Jessica Johnson

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 10am.

II. Approval of Minutes

There was not a sufficient quorum to approve the minutes.

III. Update on Legislation

Riley Donahue mentioned that bills were difficult to pass this legislative session, as it was an election year. Ian Genove agreed, suggesting that each stakeholder group get together over the summer to discuss future directions for the Commission and legislation.

Ainsley Moench announced that the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy was hosting a Reentry Simulation with the EMBRACE Initiative at the University of Maryland Baltimore Campus. The Commission was encouraged to attend and experience some of the challenges returning citizens face when re-entering society, with the goal of increasing empathy among second-chance employers.

Riley Donahue provided an update on three bills that came out of the commission: one creating an adult prison school board, one on Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) funding, and a re-entry services program. The CPRS funding bill and the adult prison school board bill will

require significant work during the interim, with the CPRS funding potentially utilizing the opioid restitution fund. The re-entry services program was renamed the volunteer services program and has passed both chambers.

Danielle Cox inquired about the status of HB 1311, the higher education financial aid bill. Ainsley Moench stated that it passed the House and was heard in a Senate committee but has not moved since. Riley Donahue shared the insight that the Senate is generally not moving bills without a cross-filer this year.

IV. Overview of Draft Program Map

Ainsley Moench presented a draft of an interactive program map developed with the Department of Labor and DPSCS, which outlines existing correctional education programs across the state. Users can filter the map by facility, program type, credential, and security classification. The intention is for the map to be hosted on the GOCPP website as a public resource.

Dr. Judith Lichtenberg asked if activities like book clubs, which are part of library programming, would be included in the program map. Jessica Johnson explained that book clubs exist alongside a variety of other programs, such as art and chess clubs, but they vary widely by institution and interests. These programs do not provide certifications or credentials.

Dr. Stephen Steurer suggested that library services, including legal services, be added to the map. Ainsley Moench confirmed she would add these services, and Jessica Johnson offered to provide information on the programs offered at each library.

Danielle Cox announced that three of the six colleges offering programs had received federal approval as official Prison Education Programs (PEPs) under the U.S. Department of Education: the University of Baltimore, Bowie State University, and Towson University. Georgetown University is awaiting final approval, which is expected soon. The new status marks the end of the Second Chance Pell and the beginning of a new, federally regulated process where DPSCS will conduct evaluations during a two-year pilot.

Dr. Stephen Steurer asked if there were any programs at ECI, NBCI, and Cumberland. Danielle Cox answered that no universities have expressed interest in PEP programming there. DPSCS will not put a college program at NBCI, and it would be difficult to put a program at WCI. She noted that a survey went out to incarcerated individuals to ask about programming interests in 2023. Additionally, Pell Grant funds must be used for programs that prepare students for employment post-release. Dr. Stephen Steurer suggested that Danielle Cox provide a future presentation to the commission on the current Pell Grant law and regulations to inform their understanding of what programs can and cannot be done.

Lucy Steinitz raised the need for books in several prison libraries and described the complicated process for book donations, including submitting a list for review before delivery. Jessica Johnson confirmed she would share the clarified donation process, which is simpler now, including the specs on what is allowable (paperbacks and hardbacks). Stephen Steurer suggested that Lucy Steinitz take a lead in forming a small group with Jessica Johnson and Dr. Judith Lichtenberg to coordinate book drives. Pat Hruz added that the Department of Labor is using Title I funds to procure a young adult book collection for the libraries to appeal to that specific population.

V. Feedback on Correctional Education Association Survey

Ainsley Moench explained that she and Dr. Stephen Steurer were asked to give a 10-minute presentation to the CEA state directors next week on the Commission. They are going to give out a short survey during the talk to gather feedback on national correctional education programs.

Deena Hausner updated the group that the annual Commission report has undergone a thorough review at GOCPP and is going through final layers before publication, expected to be released very soon.

Dr. Stephen Steurer shared findings from the Council of State Government's Justice Center report, indicating that national recidivism rates have generally dropped, with 75% of people released staying out after three years. Maryland's reporting is lagging, with its latest data point being 2019, while some states have data as recent as 2023 or 2022. While the drop in Maryland's reported recidivism is positive, there is a desire for more current data, even though there is no clear path to influence the national reporting schedule.

Diana Bailey raised a caution that different states may collect their recidivism data using varying methodologies. Dr. Stephen Steurer acknowledged this variability, noting that the study generally attempts to use re-incarceration—rather than just rearrest—as the primary measure of recidivism, but some state parameters still vary.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:02am.