



Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2026 | 10am-11am

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/rqp-jaeo-fqx/>

Attendance: Aaron Betsinger, Amanda Owens, Dr. Andrea Cantora, Anne Bocchini Pack, Sec. Betray Fox-Tolentino, Danielle Cox, Dr. David Pinder, Deena Hausner, Diana Bailey, Dominic Frisby, Donna Christy, Dr. Emily Hainze, Gordon Pack, Jamel Freeman, Jessica Johnson, Jocelyn Nolasco, John Feaster III, Dr. Judith Lichtenberg, Lucy Steinitz, Mary Gable, Meredith Conde, Michael Wilson, Munazza Abraham, Richard Gibson, Dr. Stephen Steurer, Sukyi McMahon, Ainsley Moench, Dr. Tim Stock, Zakiya Lee, Susan Leviton, Dr. Charles Adams

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 9am.

Ainsley Moench welcomed members of the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform & Emerging & Best Practices.

Dr. Stephen Steurer congratulated Dr. Andrea Cantora on their new role as the Director of Higher Education in Prison for the University System of Maryland (USM), where she will work to expand higher education in prison and re-entry services for USM institutions.

II. Approval of Minutes

The February meeting minutes were approved.

III. Introduction of Deena Hausner, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives at GOCPP

Ainsley Moench introduced Deena Hausner as the new Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives at the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy.

IV. Presentation from Dr. David Pinder, Superintendent of the Juvenile Education Services Program at the Department of Juvenile Services

Dr. David Pinder introduced staff from the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). He then gave a presentation on the Juvenile Education Services Program (JSEP) at DJS.

Dr. Stephen Steurer inquired about the number of students and staff in JSEP. Dr. David Pinder responded that there are about 176 staff members, 90% of them being teachers and educators. Sec. Betsy Fox-Tolentino added that there are currently 324 students, but depending on the time of year, it can grow to upwards of 600 students.

Ainsley Moench asked if students are able to obtain GEDs in the JSEP program. Dr. David Pinder answered that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) gave a waiver to JSEP allowing sixteen and seventeen year old students to obtain their GED, though JSEP mostly focuses on seventeen year olds. GED students must have a 145 qualifying score for the GED, be over-aged and under-credited, and have a meeting with the principal, counselor, and parent to confirm they are unlikely to return to their local education agency (LEA). Students have to be unenrolled from their current program to take the GED, which can introduce complications if they leave JSEP and have challenges re-enrolling in school, especially for special education students. JSEP is working with Sec. Betsy Fox Tolentino to strategize how to improve the transition back to LEAs.

Munazza Abraham asked what the requirements are to join one of the committees mentioned in the presentation. Dr. David Pinder responded that the committees are open to anyone working in DJS, and asked Munazza to email him with her interest.

Dr. Tim Stock asked about the programming challenges for the Eastern Shore. Dr. David Pinder explained that the Lower Eastern Shore facility is small, creating challenges in separating small groups of students due to security or safety measures, requiring the use of limited classroom and gym space for education. To address this, they are focusing on staff training in restorative justice and brain science to reduce the need to limit student's interactions, as well as working with the capital planning team to potentially add one or two classrooms and office space.

Susan Leviton asked if arts and music programs are available. Dr. David Pinder responded that a new Director of Arts and Music had been hired, and arts programming will eventually be embedded into the

day-to-day curriculum. The summer program's master schedule is being redesigned to allocate afternoons to arts, music, and holistic experiences, moving beyond just credit attainment.

Susan Leviton asked about curriculum alignment with LEAs and student transitions, noting concerns that students may fall behind. Dr. David Pinder replied that JSEP follows MSDE standards for instruction, and is required to follow all LEA credit requirements. JSEP students are taking credits in alignment with their LEA. JSEP may not offer all necessary credits, so some classes can be taken through EdMentum, a virtual learning academy. JSEP is adding a Director of Transition Support to coordinate with schools on credits and re-enrollment.

Susan Leviton followed up asking if students in JSEP are allowed to return to their LEAs. Dr. David Pinder responded that JSEP has access to all Superintendents in the state, and Sec. Betsy Fox-Tolentino is working to figure out how to aid students in their transition back to their local LEAs.

Dr. Stephen Steurer asked if students return to their original high schools. Dr. David Pinder replied that students most often are successful in returning to their original high school, and students should not automatically be placed in an alternative setting.

Anne Bocchini Pack raised a concern about the funding vulnerability. David Pinder clarified that Secretary Betsy Fox-Tolentino has asked them to produce a funding model to present to the Department of Budget and Management to ensure continuity of funds. He suggested that, long-term, a legislative baseline of required funding might be the safest way to ensure programmatic infrastructure, as JSEP does not have the same flexibility that other LEAs may have.

Dr. Stephen Steurer suggested that technology may help in providing JSEP students with adequate programming. David Pinder confirmed they have explored this, but many LEAs have cited human capital staffing limitations as a barrier.

Dr. Stephen Steurer concluded the discussion by thanking Dr. David Pinder and Secretary Betsy Fox-Tolentino, emphasizing the shared mission between JSEP and the commission's work with adult correctional facilities, as many young people from the juvenile system end up in the adult system. He noted that JSEP's experience will be valuable for the Commission's planning regarding a school district model for adult corrections.

V. Update on Legislative Activities and Workgroup Meetings

Dr. Stephen Steurer updated the Commission on several legislative bills, including one creating a new Commission to examine a school district model for correctional education, one that would establish the Commission as permanent, and one that would create an apprenticeship pilot program.

Dr. Andrea Cantora mentioned that she and a University of Baltimore Second Chance Program graduate testified on a bill regarding tuition for higher education in prison programs.

Ainsley Moench added that a bill allowing formerly incarcerated individuals to volunteer at correctional facilities was also being considered.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:05am.