

Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission Meeting Minutes

October 2, 2025

10am-11:30am

Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Alyssa Fieo, Amanda Owens, Anne Bocchini Pack, Christian Gant, Danielle Cox, David Pinder, Del. Cheryl Pasteur, Del. Elizabeth Embry, Gordon Pack, Karen Esterque Jones, Jamel Freeman, John Feaster III, Josh Weinstock, Del. Karen Simpson, Mary Gable, Meredith Conde, Michelle McGeogh, Ramieka Robinson-Peoples, Richard Gibson, Riley Donahue, Rose Dailey, Ruschelle Reuben, Dr. Stephen Steurer, Zakiya Lee, Ainsley Moench, Stephanie King

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 10am.

Dr. Stephen Steurer reviewed the meeting structure and the recommendation process. All of the proposed recommendations need to be approved by the Commission. Some recommendations may be taken up by legislators as items for legislation. Tabled items will still be included in the final report for further discussion.

Dr. Stephen Steurer remarked on his visit to MCI-W to talk to the warden, case management, and educators. He introduced two new recommendations: first, to investigate the need for more incentives to encourage non-mandatory individuals to participate in education, and second, to investigate the impact of MCI-J's closure and if educational staff can be relocated elsewhere.

A. Approval of September meeting minutes

Del. Simpson clarified in the meeting minutes that she attended the September meeting.

The meeting minutes were approved.

II. Discussion and vote on workgroup recommendations

Ainsley Moench clarified the voting process. Voting is limited to Commission members. Abstentions do not count for or against a motion. Christian Gant proposed a consent agenda to streamline voting on recommendations. Dr. Stephen Steurer added that these recommendations will be expanded on with more details.

John Feaster III noted that some members of the Commission would be abstaining from voting and would like abstentions to be recorded.

Recommendation 1 for the Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

Danielle Cox raised concerns about the wording of the recommendation regarding restricting licensing, noting that the current law allows for case-by-case review and an appeal process. She highlighted that a previous legislative attempt in the 2025 legislative session to open up licensing for individuals with criminal histories was vetoed. Dr. Stephen Steurer emphasized the need to keep the recommendation, as the warden at MCI-W noted the difficulty returning citizens have in finding employment post-release.

Del. Elizabeth Embry added that the language should reflect that there may be situations where the consideration of criminal history is relevant. John Feaster III agreed, giving the example that if someone has a child-involved offense, they could not work at a school.

Del. Karen Simpson suggested changing the wording from “pass” to “study and recommend” or “review and research.” Del. Cheryl Pasteur preferred “review and recommend.”

Gordon Pack asked for clarification on the number of votes needed to pass a recommendation with abstentions. Ainsley Moench clarified that abstentions would not count for or against votes, and votes need a majority to pass. Additionally, voting by proxy for absent members is not allowed.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 2 for the Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

Dr. Stephen Steurer clarified that the data partnership between DPSCS, Labor, and MLDSC is already occurring, and this recommendation is intended to strengthen the support for that partnership.

Christian Gant asked who the recommendation was aimed at and suggested directing it to the Department of Labor.

Del. Karen Simpson expressed that the recommendation needed more detail, suggesting "review and recommend the use of data" or including it as "ongoing commission work" in the annual report.

Dr. Stephen Steurer asked if the recommendation could use the language “help and encourage the MLDSC data partnership to better align...”

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 3 for the Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

Danielle Cox commented that DPSCS and Labor are already conducting a review of transitional programming. Dr. Stephen Steurer added that they could describe this current effort in the annual report.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 4 for the Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

Anne Bocchini Pack explained the current "break in the pipeline" where vocational training does not consistently lead to community apprenticeships. She proposed a pilot program to intentionally place graduates into community jobs that utilize their skills, leveraging existing resources without additional funding.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 5 for the Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

Dr. Stephen Steurer noted that this recommendation will be taken up by Del. Karen Simpson for legislation. Del. Elizabeth Embry emphasized the importance of the commission's recommendation aligning with the legislation.

Del. Karen Simpson cautioned against using "pass legislation" and suggested "request legislation to create."

Anne Bocchini Pack suggested targeting opioid restitution funds for this initiative.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 1 for the Higher Education Workgroup

Danielle Cox commented that state-wide coalition building is already underway with partnerships between the University System of Maryland and colleges. Dr. Stephen Steurer asked if the Commission wanted to be involved in the coalition building.

Gordon Pack suggested changing "create" to "contribute to the creation" or "facilitate, partner, contribute to" to avoid creating another entity. Zakiya Lee agreed, noting that USM is already undertaking these efforts. She suggested "support current efforts to create."

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 2 for the Higher Education Workgroup

Del. Elizabeth Embry stated she would be leading the legislative efforts for this recommendation.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 3 for the Higher Education Workgroup

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 4 for the Higher Education Workgroup

Delegate Cheryl Pasteur questioned the need for a "study" as the issues with space are already known.

Dr. Stephen Steurer read background information from Dr. Andrea Cantora, highlighting the scarcity of space for HEP programming and its impact on growth. She suggested assessing the use of current space and expansion possibilities, since a study is not necessary if the problem is known.

Danielle Cox suggested to change the wording to evaluate space in all facilities, not just ones that currently host HEP programs. She also emphasized the need to not only assess space challenges, but come up with solutions. Every facility has been evaluated for space needs.

Christian Gant suggested removing the recommendation

Del. Karen Simpson proposed the language "ongoing assessment of challenges and the solutions" to orient the recommendation to be solution-based.

Dr. Stephen Steurer supported keeping the recommendation and continuing to address this issue due to ongoing and worsening space problems, especially with the MCI-J closure.

Christian Gant suggested spelling out the acronym HEP (Higher Education in Prison) and considering time-bound recommendations. Dr. Stephen Steurer mentioned that the Commission would continue to work on these recommendations throughout its duration.

Del. Cheryl Pastuer expressed the need for annotation on this recommendation about facility closures.

Karen Simpson suggested prioritizing recommendations in the final report.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 1 for the ABE, GED, and SPED Workgroup

Dr. Stephen Steurer announced that there are already several parameters for data collection worked out in the ABE, GED, in the SPED workgroup, including waitlists, school cancellations, etc. Ruschelle Reuben is going to put together a presentation on enrollment issues.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 2 for the ABE, GED, and SPED workgroup

Del. Karen Simpson suggested changing the wording from “support” to “advocate.”

Dr. Stephen Steurer expressed concern about the cost and the legislative climate, suggesting encouraging agencies to reallocate existing staff.

John Feaster III suggested identifying where the correctional education analyst would be placed, as the Department of Labor and DPSCS both have different data sets and authority over different aspects of correctional education. Danielle Cox agreed, stating that DPSCS and Labor already have data analysts and questioned the need for a new position solely to evaluate the use of data.

Gordon Pack expressed concern about the budget, saying it might be better to change the recommendation to encourage partnerships between the Department of Labor and DPSCS to analyze correctional education data together.

John Feaster III suggested identifying where the position would reside and estimated a temporary staff position cost. He believed the position should reside with the commission due to increased

data requirements. Ruschelle Reuben noted that the Department of Labor does not have data analysts for regular, monthly analysis of trends and elevation of issues, and that such a position would be beneficial.

Del. Karen Simpson suggested changing the recommendation to continue to assess the need for an educational data analyst for the needs of the Commission, Department of Labor, and DPSCS. Danielle Cox added that assessing current capabilities is important.

Anne Bocchini Pack advocating for keeping the recommendation as is to ensure the new data collected can be utilized. She suggested putting the analyst in the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy as a neutral convener. John Feaster III, Danielle Cox, and Del. Cheryl Pasteur agreed.

Ainsley Moench asked to put this recommendation with the changed wording on the consent agenda. With no moves for further discussion, the recommendation was placed on the consent agenda.

Recommendation 3 for the ABE, GED, and SPED Workgroup

Ainsley Moench noted the time at 11:25 and that three recommendations were left. She asked if the Commission would like to approve the consent agenda or move onto the recommendations. Dr. Stephen Steurer asked to move onto the next recommendation.

Del. Cheryl Pasteur pointed out she would like to revisit the GED recommendation that was not discussed yet. Dr. Stephen Steurer assured her they would.

Del. Cheryl Pasteur emphasized the need for a central body to oversee all of correctional education, and neither MSDE, DPSCS, or the Department of Labor should have sole ownership though collaboration is going well.

Dr. Stephen Steurer said the Commission is ready to put together a design or work on a design. He mentioned that the Commission has been a good example of collaboration, and having a central board would prevent siloing.

Danielle Cox commented that the recommendation may want to avoid naming specific agencies until further clarification. Dr. Stephen Steurer disagreed.

Ainsley Moench noted that the time was 11:30 and some Commissioners may have to leave. She asked all Commissioners to vote on the consent agenda in the chat, stating whether they approved, disapproved, or abstained.

Stephanie King, Amanda Owens, Karen Simpson, Christian Gant, Karen Esterque Jones, Jamel Freeman, Dr. David Pinder, Del. Elizabeth Embry, Dr. Stephen Steurer, Ramieka Robinson-Peoples, and Gordon Pack approved.

Mary Gable, Danielle Cox, and John Feaster III abstained.

Ainsley Moench announced that the consent agenda was passed. Afterwards, quorum was lost.

Recommendation 4 for the ABE, GED, and SPED Workgroup

Mary Gable noted that students can only have a GED diploma or a high school diploma, but not both.

Stephen Steurer mentioned legislative efforts to create options like a certificate and a separate high school diploma through a school board model for juvenile services.

Del. Cheryl Pasteur expressed confusion about the scope of the recommendation, specifically regarding IEPs and certificates of completion versus traditional diplomas.

Alyssa Fieo clarified that the recommendation addresses two groups: first, students with significant disabilities on a certificate track who are currently only offered GED prep, and second, students (with or without IEPs) who are close to earning a traditional diploma but are forced into GED prep in adult facilities. She cited an example of a student currently in the Youth Detention Center with 20 credits who will lose the opportunity to graduate upon transferring to an adult facility. She also noted the very low GED pass rate for students with IEP.

Del. Cheryl Pasteur emphasized the need for clarity in the recommendation to address both categories of students and ensure they receive appropriate services.

Danielle Cox reiterated that credit recovery is only available to students aged 18-21 who voluntarily re-enroll in their home school, and that most do not.

Dr. Stephen Steurer suggested having another conversation about the recommendations that the Commission had not gotten to due to time constraints, and inquired whether the Commission could vote by email to avoid necessitating another meeting with quorum. Ainsley Moench offered to check with the Attorney General's office.

Anne Bocchini Pack suggested a separate meeting to discuss the remaining three recommendations. Del. Cheryl Pastuer agreed she would like to meet about the GED recommendation. Dr. Stephen Steurer suggested a doodle poll to have another meeting.

III. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:55am.