

Career Technology and Workforce Development

Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2025

10am-11am

Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Tamara Barron, John Griffin, Anne Bocchini Pack, John Feaster III, Diana Bailey, Dr. Stephen Steurer, Ramieka Robinson-Peoples, Ainsley Moench

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 10am.

II. Approval of August meeting minutes

The meeting minutes were approved.

III. Discussion and approval of recommendations

Diana Bailey announced that the main focus of the meeting would be to review seven proposed recommendations for the November report to the Commission.

Recommendations: Pass comprehensive requirements for licensing authorities to restrict licensing on the basis of criminal history.

Anne Bocchini Pack recommended combining recommendations one and three, as the third recommendation requires licensing authorities to report when they deny a license.

Stephen Steurer added that Delegates Karen Simpson and Elizabeth Embry are working on legislation related to recommendations one and two, emphasizing that the commission's work is influencing future legislative efforts.

John Feaster III commented on the first recommendation, suggesting that while it sounds good in practice, subjective reasons often lead to license denials, making it difficult to pinpoint criminal history as the sole cause. He proposed a preliminary approval or denial process before background checks to clearly identify the reason for denial. Diana Bailey inquired if the Department of Labor (DOL) had such data, and John Feaster III offered to contact the commissioner of the Division of Occupational Professional Licensing to obtain this information.

Ainsley Moench supported the idea of preliminary determinations and noted that the first recommendation aims to detail comprehensive requirements, including predeterminations and

clear statements from licensing authorities about crimes that disqualify applicants. Regarding data on license denials due to criminal history, Ainsley Moench mentioned that a 2018 law requiring a five-year retrospective on licensing failed to yield information from the DOL. She suggested approving recommendation two, which covers requiring DOL to report on what licenses have been denied for the past five years conditionally, pending confirmation that such data is obtainable.

All three recommendations were approved.

Recommendation: Utilize MLDSC data to align occupational programs with labor market outcomes and needs.

No comments were made.

Recommendation: Continue building up transitional programming.

Diana Bailey presented recommendation five, which calls for the continuation of transitional programming, noting the recent hiring of new staff in July. Dr. Stephen Steurer suggested that the final report should acknowledge existing efforts by the labor department to avoid presenting recommendations as criticisms, instead highlighting ongoing work and encouraging further progress.

Anne Bocchini Pack suggested adding more specific language, as building up transitional programming may look different to each person.

John Feaster III offered to provide a portfolio of existing transitional services and programs to help identify areas for improvement and consistency across the state.

Ramieka Robinson inquired about surveying incarcerated and post-release populations to align their interests with labor market needs and provide services accordingly. Ainsley Moench responded that the Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services recently surveyed incarcerated individuals on educational programming needs and offered to share this data or conduct a new survey if necessary. Anne Bocchini Pack suggested focusing surveys on the post-release population, particularly those who experience revocation hearings, to understand what support would have prevented re-entry failures, as their needs often differ from pre-release expectations.

Recommendation: Create a pilot program to use Work Release to place pre-apprenticeship graduates into community apprenticeships when they are within 18 months of release, ensuring they are released employment-ready with job connections.

John Griffin questioned the feasibility of DPSCS rebuilding infrastructure for such a program, given current budget constraints, as a similar program in DC was discontinued due to funding issues. Anne Bocchini Pack countered that the necessary personnel and existing resources from the Department of Labor could be reallocated, making it a zero-cost option.

Jessica Johnson highlighted logistical limitations with work release, noting that many occupations like masonry or HVAC require employees to work at multiple transient locations, which is not permitted under current work release rules. She acknowledged that some work release programs exist in pockets, such as a partnership with a recycling center in Hagerstown, but emphasized the need to align job placements with the strict rules.

Ramieka Robinson raised concerns about mile radius restrictions for work release participants and asked about minimizing these barriers and implementing employer incentives to hire system-impacted individuals.

Diana Bailey acknowledged that existing employer incentives are insufficient to significantly impact hiring decisions for formerly incarcerated individuals. Ramieka Robinson suggested exploring more attractive incentives and engaging employers to understand their interests and policy needs. Stephen Steurer recommended consulting business representatives on the Correctional Education Council (CEC) or the Governor's Workforce Investment Board for suggestions on effective incentives. Tamara Barron mentioned a promotional video produced by DPSCS and Labor, featuring employers encouraging second-chance hiring, which could be a valuable resource for the report.

Recommendation: Request legislation to create a line item to fund the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist program, with the opportunity to expand with grant funding.

Dr. Stephen Steurer noted that Delegate Simpson is working on this recommendation, aiming to expand grant funding and the program. He suggested expanding the role of peer recovery specialists to include educational assistance, drawing on past successful peer tutoring programs.

Tamara Barron noted that the CPRS program is now under correctional education and receives a small grant from the Maryland Office of Opioid Response (MOOR) for training and professional development. She noted that the program is growing, with graduates securing jobs both within institutions and in the community. Anne Bocchini Pack suggested leveraging opioid restitution funds for the CPRS program, as it aligns with MOOR's focus and presents a suitable pilot for community placements due to its office-based nature, which bypasses traditional work release barriers.

Ramieka Robinson inquired about the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) having a re-entry specialist to help connect returning citizens with employment opportunities. John Feaste confirmed that MOED's program expanded into a statewide re-entry navigator initiative, with a navigator assigned to each of the 13 comprehensive American Job Centers across the state. He advised contacting local American Job Centers directly to access re-entry navigators, as staff positions change regularly.

Ainsley Moench outlined the next steps, stating that the recommendations will be fleshed out with more detail and presented to the commission for approval next week. Dr. Stephen Steurer

emphasized the importance of filling out the rubric with background information, potential challenges, and success metrics for each recommendation to ensure a comprehensive report.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55am.