

Prison Education Delivery Commission

2025 Report

House Bill 877/Chapter 110, 2025

Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

June 30, 2025



June 30, 2025

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable William C. "Bill" Ferguson IV
President of the Senate
State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Adrienne Jones
Speaker of the House of Delegates
State House, H-101
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 877/Chapter 110, 2025 (MSAR #16486)

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

On behalf of the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission, I am pleased to submit a Commission interim report on our work so far. This report will outline the progress the Commission has made, as well as issues the Commission is studying for future recommendations.

This report discusses and summarizes important issues in correctional education discovered by the Commission's workgroups.

As required, five color copies will be sent to the DLS Legislative Library.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephen Steurer
Chair, Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission

cc: Sarah Albert, Department of Legislative Services (5 copies)
Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq., Executive Director, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Commission Members	3
Advisory Stakeholder Group Members	4
Executive Summary	5
Background	5
Commission Activities	6
Adult Basic Education, General Education Development, and Special Education Workgroup	7
Higher Education Workgroup	10
Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup	13
Commission-Wide Focuses	16
Future Activities and Areas of Inquiry	17
Conclusion	18

Acknowledgments

This *Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission 2025 Report* is the result of hard work, valuable input, and dedication from numerous stakeholders, including State and local public safety representatives, legislators, community advocates, professors, experts in the field, State and local government representatives, and members with lived experience. Everyone was exceptionally generous with their time and supportive feedback. Their participation in the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission and the Advisory Stakeholder Group, as well as their feedback, suggestions, and recommendations, were invaluable for its report. The completion, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of this report would not have been possible without their active participation and support.

Commission Members

The Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission is composed of various members and representatives, and a Chair appointed by the Governor. There are five vacancies: three senators, one representative of the Maryland State's Attorney's Association, and one representative of Maryland Correctional Enterprises.

Dr. Stephen Steurer

Chair, National Expert on Correctional Education

Delegate Cheryl Pasteur

House of Delegates

Delegate Elizabeth Embry

House of Delegates

Delegate Karen Simpson

House of Delegates

Danielle Cox

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, *Designee of Secretary Carol J. Scruggs*

David Domenici

Department of Juvenile Services

Secretary Sanjay Rai

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Christian Gant

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Office of the Public Defender

Judge Marc Desimone

Baltimore County Circuit Court

John Feaster III

Department of Labor, *Designee of Secretary Portia Wu*

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State Department of Education

Amanda Owens

Abell Foundation

Richard Gibson

Baltimore Police Department

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Dr. Charles B. Adams

Institute for Restorative Justice and Practices & Prison Education Program, Bowie State University

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Karen Jones

Hands On, LLC

Jamel R. Freeman

MSW Graduate Candidate at the UMB School of Social Work & Peer Lived-Experienced Member

Dr. Andrea Cantora

Second Change College Program, University of Baltimore, *Chair of the Higher Education Workgroup*

Stephanie Ann King

Wicomico County Partnership for Families and Children

Gordon Pack

PREPARE for Parole and Reentry

Adam Cummings (Former Member)

Maryland Correctional Enterprises

Advisory Stakeholder Group Members

The Advisory Stakeholder Group consists of members with experience in criminal justice policy reform, advocacy for individuals with learning disabilities and those from marginalized communities, restorative justice, and peer recovery and support services.

Aja Smith

Alyssa Fieo

Assistant Public Defender, Juvenile Protection Division, Maryland Office of the Public Defender

Anita West

Board Member, PREPARE for Parole Maryland

Anne Bocchini Pack

Co-Founder and Director of Advocacy for PREPARE for Parole Maryland

Diana Bailey

Chair of the Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

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Chief Executive Officer, Anne Arundel County Community Action

Dr. Elyshia Aseltine

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Academic Program Manager, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

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Lived Experience Member

Dr. Judith Lichtenberg

Professor Emerita of Philosophy, Georgetown University, *Chair of the Advisory Stakeholder Group*

Nick Moroney

Former Director, Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit

Rose Dailey

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, Behind the Walls Workgroup

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Director of Education & Workforce Skills Training for Correctional Institutions, Department of Labor

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Executive Summary

Pursuant to House Bill 877/Chapter 110, 2025, the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission (Commission) must submit an interim report to the Governor and the General Assembly by June 1, 2028, as it relates to its findings and recommendations.

Under the leadership of Chair Dr. Stephen Steurer, national expert on correctional education, this *Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission 2025 Report* includes information on the activities of the Commission and outlines its progress as well as issues to study for future recommendations. It also summarizes important issues in correctional education discovered by the Commission's workgroups. For more information regarding prior activities, please visit the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy's (Office) website at: <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/councils-commissions-and-workgroups/prison-education-delivery-reform-commission/>.

Background

Chapters 945 and 946 of 2024 (House Bill 209/Senate Bill 623) established the Commission to develop recommendations relating to education and its impact on the criminal justice system, and required the Office to provide staff for the Commission. Pursuant to its charge, the Commission must:

- Convene an advisory stakeholder group that includes organizations with experience in:
 - Criminal justice policy reform;
 - Advocating for individuals with learning disabilities and those from marginalized communities;
 - Restorative justice; and
 - Peer recovery and support services;
- Work with the advisory stakeholder group, including conducting roundtable discussion forums seeking public input in all geographic regions of the State;
- Develop an education-focused state-wide framework of policies to invest in strategies to increase public safety and reduce recidivism of adult offenders, using a data-driven approach;
- Research best practices for the primary, secondary, postsecondary, and career or vocational education of those who are subject to the criminal and juvenile justice systems;
- Identify measures to mitigate risk factors that contribute to adult contact with the criminal justice system, with a focus on education;
- Evaluate current workforce programs in which incarcerated individuals participate and the programs' effectiveness in training for employment opportunities that result in living wages; and

- Request technical assistance from:
 - The Abell Foundation;
 - The Annie E. Casey Foundation;
 - The Council of State Governments;
 - The Vera Institute of Justice;
 - The Coalition on Adult Basic Education;
 - The RAND Corporation; and
 - Other similar organizations.

House Bill 877/Chapter 110, 2025, extended the termination date of the Commission by three years, from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2029, and extended the due date of the interim and final reports. In May 2025, Delegate Marlon Amprey submitted a letter to the Commission to clarify the due date for the required reports. Based on the provided guidance, the Commission will produce an annual report each year until its termination in June 2029.

Commission Activities

Under the leadership of Chair Dr. Stephen Steurer, and with the support of staff from the Office, the Commission initially met in October 2024. It approved an Advisory Stakeholder Group to carry out the day-to-day tasks of the Commission. Commission and Advisory Stakeholder Group members participate in three different workgroups: the Adult Basic Education, General Education Development, and Special Education Workgroup; the Higher Education Workgroup; and the Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup.

Between October 2024 and June 2025, the Commission met seven times and convened 14 monthly Advisory Stakeholder Group meetings. The Commission also conducted six interviews with state directors of correctional education; disseminated a national survey through the Correctional Education Association; and issued data requests to the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, and the Department of Labor.

Adult Basic Education, General Education Development, and Special Education Workgroup

In 2025, the Workgroup convened six times to review effective teaching content to incarcerated individuals and explore the impact of education on incarceration risk. As a result, the Workgroup gathered insight pertaining to six topics: completions and enrollment; special education; lack of alternative job assignments; mandatory education; school closures; and youth transition from high school to GED (*as described in greater detail below*).

Legislative Mandate	Workgroup Focus
Identify best practices for primary and secondary education in correctional settings	Review what works for teaching foundational and high school-level content to incarcerated individuals
Identify educational risk factor mitigation strategies	Explore how education can reduce incarceration risk

Completions and Enrollment

GED completions and enrollment are significantly lower than in the decade before the COVID-19 pandemic. This hinders entry to further programming, such as career technology and Maryland Correctional Education job training.

Data from annual reports before, during, and after the COVID-19 epidemic show a continuing low level of program participation and completion compared with previous years. While the correctional education GED pass rate is higher than the State average, the number of completions remains below 275 per year.¹ Annual completions before 2008, when the Department of Labor took over responsibility for providing correctional education, ranged from 400 to over 600.² While the latest version of the GED, which began in 2014, is more difficult and resulted in a temporary drop in completions, national completions have generally recovered to pre-2014 levels.

Half or more of incarcerated individuals enter prison without a verifiable high school diploma. Obtaining a GED is crucial as it serves as a prerequisite for advanced educational and vocational programs, including higher education, occupational training, and employment with Maryland Correctional Enterprises. Furthermore, capacity in higher education programs is expected to increase in the coming years. This underscores the importance of increasing GED obtainment, as program slots may outpace the number of students eligible to fill them.

¹ Maryland Department of Labor. *Correctional Education Council 2024 Annual Report*.
<https://www.labor.maryland.gov/ce/cereport2024.pdf>

² Maryland State Department of Education. *The Fact Book 2007-2008: A Statistical Handbook*.
<https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DBS/FactBook/FactBook20072008.pdf>

Special Education

The number of special education students completing high school is low.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), eligible school-age youth with disabilities continue to be entitled to special education and related services pursuant to an “individualized education program” (IEP) if they are held in a state adult correctional facility.³ There are some limitations related to this provision, and the right to special education and related services terminates at the end of the school year in which the student turns 21 years of age. In 2023, 162 students were served with IEPs; 165 were served in 2024.⁴ Yet, based on the data provided to the Commission, only eight students passed the GED in that same period. Special education students may find alternative pathways to obtain a high school diploma easier than passing the GED.

The Correctional Education Special Education Handbook is currently in the process of being reviewed, updated, and finalized. The Commission has requested a copy of the updated policies and procedures.

Lack of Alternative Job Assignments

GED completers have few options to continue earning diminution credits, authorized by the Justice Reinvestment Act, at the same level allowed through GED program participation.

For individuals eligible to earn additional diminution credits at the rate of 20 per month under the Justice Reinvestment Act, there is a lack of alternative job assignments to continue earning the same number of credits after GED completion. Currently, higher education in prison programs are classified as voluntary, part-time job assignments and are therefore not eligible for the 20 diminution credits available under the JRA for GED programs. Most institutional jobs, including the job of Education Clerk, offer only 10 diminution credits per month, with some jobs earning only five credits per month.⁵ This lack of opportunity creates an unintended disincentive to complete the GED.

Beginning in Fall 2025, higher education programs will be classified as full-time programming, allowing students to earn the 20 diminution credits available under the JRA.

Mandatory Education

The mandatory 240 calendar days in education for those who do not have a GED or high school diploma, have at least 18 months left on their sentence and are not exempt due to a medical, developmental, or learning disability may not accurately reflect the time spent in school.

³ 20 U.S. Code § 1400

⁴ Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. *ABE/GED/SPED Subgroup Questions and Areas of Interest*. <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/Correctional-Education-Data-Request-3-2.pdf>

⁵ For more information, please refer to §§ 3-703 through 3-707 of the Correctional Services Article.

Under § 11–902 of the Labor and Employment Article, individuals who do not have a high school diploma or GED—and who are not exempt due to medical, developmental, or learning disabilities—must be assigned to a Mandatory Education Program for a minimum of 240 calendar days or a workforce development program. However, this statutory requirement is based on calendar days of assignment, not actual days of instruction. Because school closures vary widely across institutions, the number of classroom days incarcerated students actually receive can differ dramatically. In an ideal scenario with no closures, 240 calendar days would yield approximately 171 classroom days. In fact, a student at Maryland Correctional Institution - Jessup in 2024 (with a 12.6% closure rate) received about 150 days of instruction, while a student at the Western Correctional Institution (with a 73.2% closure rate) may have received as few as 46 classroom days.⁶ These discrepancies significantly impact educational opportunities and outcomes based solely on housing assignment.

School Closures

Chronic school closures exist in several institutions.

Examination of recent school closure data from 2023 to 2024 has revealed chronic issues with school closures in several institutions. School closure rates range from over 10% to as much as 80%. Discussion with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Department of Labor staff indicates the causes include construction, correctional officer shortage, shortage of some educational staff, and limited educational technology and resources to facilitate teacher/student interaction and communication. This greatly impacts “seat time” for continuous instruction, which is critical for educational growth. In addition, many enrolled as mandatory students may spend very few days in school and may complete their 240-day requirement with little attendance. For instruction to be effective for students with no high school diploma, they need to be engaged and in attendance five days per week for several months. MCIJ and Maryland Correctional Institution - Women joined Jessup Correctional Institution as particularly high-functioning programs, with two-year closure rates of 11.7% and 17.4%, respectively. Looking at what makes these three institutions so successful might help prevent school closures at other institutions.

Youth Transition from High School to GED

COMAR requires those in adult correctional facilities to work towards a Maryland high school diploma through the passing of a GED examination, whereas those coming into the adult system may only have a few credits left before high school graduation.

While COMAR requires those in adult correctional facilities to work toward a GED diploma, some students under 21 may only have a few credits left before high school graduation. By having a one-size-fits-all model for obtaining a high school diploma, education may be disrupted

⁶ Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. *Closures and Attendance*.
<https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/Closures-and-Attendance-1.xlsx>

by preventing some students from accessing the high school curriculum that would better serve them, while forcing others to restart their education in an environment where they may already be academically behind and face significant social challenges.

Higher Education Workgroup

In 2025, the Workgroup convened five times to assess effective college-level programming within prisons and evaluate its impact on reentry and recidivism. As a result, the Workgroup gathered insight pertaining to six topics: funding, technology, space, incentive, reentry support, and state-wide coordination (*as described in greater detail below*).

Legislative Mandate	Workgroup Focus
Identify best practices for postsecondary education in correctional settings	Assess effective college-level programming inside prisons
Identify educational risk factor mitigation strategies	Evaluate how college access affects reentry and recidivism rates

Funding

Incarcerated students are ineligible to access State funding for student aid. Colleges and universities may struggle to cover operational costs for higher education in prison programs.

Incarcerated students enrolled in higher education in prison (HEP) programs are eligible to receive Federal Pell Grants. However, they are ineligible to access State funding for student aid. Colleges cover the cost of tuition and fees after Pell Grants are awarded, as Pell Grants do not cover the full cost, and incarcerated students cannot be charged for the award difference. This is a financial burden that colleges are required to fund through philanthropic grants or institutional support. Additionally, colleges that run HEP programs are required to secure funding for operational costs. While some colleges that operate HEP programs in Maryland have been successful at implementing and sustaining their programs, others have been unable to do so (e.g., Wor Wic Community College recently closed its program due to funding issues). This has been identified as a barrier for any new college seeking to start up a HEP program. Finally, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services has seen a significant reduction (minus \$700,000 in FY 2026) in its State general funds budget to support post-secondary education programs.

Technology

Universities cannot fully utilize their current technology and management systems. Students have inadequate technology resources outside of class.

Some incarcerated college students do not have 24/7 access to their college's learning management and library systems. While some incarcerated college students have access to computers or laptops (not connected to the internet), they only have access when inside the facility's education department. The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is currently working in partnership with the HEP programs to implement a technology solution for the next two years, after which the costs will be transferred to the colleges and universities. The cost associated with expanding technology access is a major barrier for both the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the colleges currently running, or planning to start, HEP programs.

Space

Space for programming is scarce, which limits the growth of new programs.

Space for HEP programming is scarce, which limits the growth of existing programs and the ability for new programs to start up. HEP programs typically operate in correctional facility education departments and share classroom space with volunteer programs and those run by the Department of Labor. This limits the time and space available for HEP programs to operate. Expanding technology access may reduce some space issues and allow for more students to enroll and obtain a credential, but should not be considered a replacement for in-person classes and programming, as the professional networking and soft skills built through in-person classes are critical to student development.

Incentives

Incarcerated college programs must compete with higher-paying job assignments, such as in Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE). MCE workers receive the highest institutional pay, along with diminution credits and pay incentives.

Currently, most HEP programs occur in the evening, and participation is on an unpaid volunteer basis. As volunteers, students can not earn pay or credit incentives due to earning these in their primary job assignment during the day, such as MCE. To compete with MCE, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services will create a paid College Student job assignment in fall 2025, paid at the rate of \$2.00 per day, for students who participate in college Monday through Friday, for a minimum of six hours per day (this can be a combination of in-person, virtual, hybrid, and study hours). Anything less will be considered an unpaid volunteer assignment. Students in the paid College Student job assignment will also earn 10 or 20 good days a month, based on JRA eligibility. Per COMAR, college students also earn 40-60 credits (based on conviction) for each degree that they achieve.⁷ Additionally, students who decide to work for MCE during the day to earn higher pay have the option to volunteer part-time for college in the evening, if the college offers this option. However, it will take a significantly longer time to

⁷ For more information, please refer to § 3-706.1 of the Correctional Services Article.

complete their degree (8-10 years) compared to a paid full-time college student job assignment that takes 4-5 years to complete the degree. The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Education Specialists (contractual staff through a three-year grant) speak to the GED students about the benefits of being in college full-time versus MCE, such as the reduction of barriers post-release and higher living wages. In the coming year, the Commission will look closer at the diminution credits awarded to students who complete post-secondary credentials and the importance of additional staff to support these programs.

Reentry Support

Higher education students must receive reentry support as a condition of Pell Grant Restoration.

A U.S. Department of Education requirement for Pell Restoration (2023) is for HEP programs to ensure that incarcerated college students receive reentry support to complete their degree and address other needs, such as employment, housing, and treatment services.⁸ Many Maryland HEP programs have students who do not complete their post-secondary credentials during their incarceration. A major barrier to degree completion post-release is having the financial support to complete. Some colleges provide students with the financial resources to complete their degree and address basic needs. Additionally, some colleges that run HEP programs currently provide reentry support on campus and in partnership with community-based organizations. Creating and/or sustaining such reentry efforts requires staffing and resources that not all colleges have access to.

State-wide Coordination

Maryland would benefit from having a strong, state-wide support system for colleges and universities that desire to or are currently providing higher education programming in prisons.

Maryland would benefit from having a strong, state-wide support system for colleges providing HEP programming. Efforts for a state-wide partnership have been underway since 2023, when the University System of Maryland (USM) and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services entered into an MOU to allow for USM colleges to operate programs in Maryland prisons. Additionally, USM has formed a state-wide committee for HEP stakeholders to collaborate on how to expand HEP programming in Maryland. USM is actively seeking philanthropic funding to support these state-wide efforts in hopes of garnering fiscal support in the future from the State.

⁸ 34 CFR Part 668 Subpart P

Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

In 2025, the Workgroup convened five times to determine which career programs provide real job opportunities and to assess how such programs lead to jobs. As a result, the Workgroup gathered insight pertaining to four topics: transitional instruction; data collection and sharing; license and post-release alignment; and barriers to employment (*as described in greater detail below*).

Legislative Mandate	Workgroup Focus
Identification of best practices for vocational training in correctional settings	Determining which career programs provide real job opportunities
Evaluation of workforce programs' employment effectiveness	Assessing how well programs lead to jobs with living wages after release

Transitional Instruction

Transitional program completion is low.

Throughout the past decade, the number of incarcerated individuals completing transitional programming has declined from around 3,000 certificates obtained in FY 2014⁹ to only 660 certificates obtained in FY 2024.¹⁰ Transitional programming is key to ensuring successful reentry. These programs are needed at each institution and pre-release centers that release women and men back into the community. Some of the instructional components should include: career exploration including selected assessments; employment readiness skills; financial literacy; computer literacy and usage, even if access is limited; job search skills and resources; training for online applications and creating resumes; labor market data impacting training and employment options; and, based on individual criminal charges, what licenses/training may or may not be possible under Maryland law.

Transitional programs are understaffed.

The number of transitional instructors has steadily declined from 22 in FY 2014¹¹ to only five in FY 2025.¹² The recruitment, retention, and training of transitional instructors is critical to ensure

⁹ Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. (2014). *Education and Workforce Training Coordinating Council for Correctional Institutions 2014 Activity Report*. <https://labor.maryland.gov/ce/cereport2014.pdf> It is important to note that the report included a joint effort between the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

¹⁰ Maryland Department of Labor. *Correctional Education Council 2024 Annual Report*. <https://www.labor.maryland.gov/ce/cereport2024.pdf>

¹¹ Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. (2014). *Education and Workforce Training Coordinating Council for Correctional Institutions 2014 Activity Report*. <https://labor.maryland.gov/ce/cereport2014.pdf>

¹² Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. (2025). *Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup Meeting, May 29, 2025* [YouTube].

program availability and capacity. Job descriptions need to be updated for a broader scope of work that is inclusive of necessary instructional experiences and skills.

As of July 1, 2025, the Department of Labor has hired additional transitional instructors under PINs, bringing the total to 11.¹³

Data Collection and Sharing

Data sharing and interagency communication between the Department of Labor, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, and the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center on employment outcome data are lacking, resulting in the inability to effectively evaluate programming.

Currently, there is little tracking, evaluation, and coordination of post-release employment outcomes by key partners in the correctional education and reentry space, such as with the Department of Parole and Probation. Returning citizen data may not be consistently sought, reported, or shared. Outcome data, such as employment consistency, wage, and industry, are key for program performance evaluation. In the past, grant funding required grantees to track employment outcome data. For many years, the State has not sustained those functions once the federal requirements were completed. Obtaining data on returning citizens is often difficult to manage once they are back in the community, as they may not be responsive or easy to contact.

It is important to note that the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center is in the process of working with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Department of Labor to track employment outcomes of those who complete correctional education programs.

Licensure and Post-Release Alignment

Some licensure or certificate programs offered by the Department of Labor require additional training or the purchase of tools upon release.

Returning citizens will generally find additional costs as a barrier to training completion and employment in a high-wage occupation that builds on their training inside the fence. The Barber Stylist program, for example, requires 300 hours of training post-release to obtain a full barber's license, and students are expected to have their own tool set, which can cost up to \$1,000. Automotive trades may require tools up to \$15,000, and many industries require apprenticeships that cannot be completed in prison.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKujvDVOIT4&list=PL4m2jMSGM67yeNKO-XG9NIP1wpigQMrQw&index=](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKujvDVOIT4&list=PL4m2jMSGM67yeNKO-XG9NIP1wpigQMrQw&index=4)

4

¹³ Ibid.

Some career technology and workforce development programs offered by the Department of Labor may not offer licensure to returning citizens.

Some career technology and workforce development programs offered by the Department of Labor may not offer licensure to returning citizens based on their criminal charges or occupational program content and competencies that do not meet State standards.

Barriers to Employment

Returning citizens face barriers to employment upon release.

Many employers are unwilling to hire or disclose whether they are friendly to hiring returning citizens. Private companies and State agency human resource departments may disqualify applicants based on their criminal history and ignore their competitive workforce skills, such as graphic design, accounts management, etc. Specifically, policies may disqualify returning citizens on active parole and probation from volunteering or working in correctional or higher education institutions, according to COMAR.¹⁴ Upon return to the community, returning citizens need employment and wages as soon as possible, and often do not have the time to complete unpaid training. Expansion of paid options, such as pre-apprenticeships, inside the correctional facility would be useful to lead to a paid apprenticeship upon release. Many State and employer policies impact the reentry and employment process. This includes the time it takes to obtain IDs in the community if they were not able to secure them while incarcerated. Qualitative data shared by returning citizens with lived experience can provide more current examples and issues.

¹⁴ Md. Code Regs. 12.02.13.03

Commission-Wide Focuses

Building on the insight and identified topics for each workgroup to further explore, the Commission will examine three common items: technology, administrative models, and data collection and sharing (*as described in greater detail below*).

Technology

There is a lack of current and available educational technology.

There is currently little integration of technology resources with face-to-face instruction in academic or career technology programs. Existing technology contracts limit the use of educational laptops and tablets to the classroom, hindering students' ability to easily access educational materials and resources (such as assignments, readings, or communications with teachers) outside of a classroom setting. Current technology contracts for security, incarcerated individual telephones, commissary, and inmate financial services also severely limit internet use, laptops, tablets, and digital technology models used in most public schools and college programs.

Higher education program participants do not have access to their college or university's learning management systems. Laptops are only available in education departments, and not in living quarters.

It is important to note that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is currently working in partnership with higher education in prison programs to implement technology solutions; however, the cost of these solutions is a major barrier.

Administrative Model

Maryland has a unique administrative and instructional model, which requires further study.

Maryland is the only state to provide correctional education through the Department of Labor. Other states provide correctional education through a correctional agency or a school district. The Commission will study best practices for administrative and instructional models of correctional education and report findings in the annual report with the pro bono assistance of the RAND Corporation.

Data Collection and Sharing

The content and capabilities of the central repository of correctional education data and information from 2008 to present, called CESTudent, are not being used to manage and evaluate programs. Data collection and sharing expectations could be clarified between agencies.

The Department of Information Technology worked with the Maryland State Department of Education and the Department of Labor to develop an educational program database for the correctional education program. The database, called CESTudent, contains the entire 2008 to

present record of student information and program, including attendance, enrollment, waiting lists, program completion (certificates and high school diplomas), and more. This database should be used for daily program management, evaluation, and annual reports. For a number of years, the Department of Labor utilized the capabilities of this database for monthly program review, management, evaluation, and annual Correctional Education Council reports. In the last few years, the Department of Labor stopped using CEStudent regularly. When the Commission requested data on enrollment, attendance, waitlists, and completion, it took weeks to answer due to miscommunications between agencies. In the next few weeks, the Commission will interview staff communications from both agencies to ascertain the problem and recommend a solution.

Future Activities and Areas of Inquiry

Below are future activities that the Commission will address:

- Public forums to gain input from the community
- Correctional institution visits to gain input from currently incarcerated individuals
- Presentations on best practices for correctional education
- Presentation on correctional education database
- Collaboration with the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center and the Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citizens and Expanded Reentry Services
- Develop a list of recommendations to submit to the Governor and General Assembly

The Commission will also gather insight regarding the following inquiries:

- How are individual student education plans and case management reentry plans coordinated?
- How can issues of enrollment, attendance, and school closures be improved to increase “seat time”?
- Are there areas of concern in special education compliance reports from 2021 and 2025?
- Can there be improvement of transition issues, such as completion of training hours after release, acquisition of tools for work, and the coordination of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services’ reentry plans with the Department of Labor services after release?
- How are parole/probation efforts coordinated after release with the completion of education programs?
- What is the professional development program for teachers? Is the Department of Labor utilizing recognized adult and correctional education training resources?
- How does the correctional teacher salary plan for teachers, librarians, transition staff, and administrators compare with public school salary plans?
- How can staffing, technology, and materials help increase the use of libraries by the incarcerated population?

- What is the Correctional Education Council's role and responsibility for program review, evaluation, and improvement?
- Does the correctional education program in the Department of Labor meet Correctional Education Association and American Library Association standards?

Conclusion

Under the leadership of Chair Dr. Stephen Steurer, and with support of staff from the Office, the Commission will continue to examine correctional education and its impact on incarceration risk, recidivism rates, and job placement after release. The Commission will also report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly, as required by law.