

JOTF_fAV_SB971

Uploaded by: FRAZIER, DERRELL

Position: FAV

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 971:
DIMINUTION CREDITS – EDUCATION MILESTONES

TO: Chairman. William C. Smith, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Derrell Frazier, Policy Advocate

DATE: March 5, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. We support Senate Bill 971 as a means of increasing the employability of job seekers with criminal records.

The educational and training systems operating within most correctional institutions are a key component of inmate rehabilitation. Maryland's mandatory education law requires inmates to enroll in educational or workforce skills classes: 1) If the individual does not have a high school diploma; 2) If the individual has at least 18 months remaining on their sentence, and; 3) Is not exempt due to medical, developmental, or learning disabilities. Inmates must participate for a minimum of 120 days, but many never complete the program.

Currently, inmates, except for those serving a sentence for a crime of violence, sexual offenses, or kingpin drug offenses, can earn up to thirty (30) diminution credits per month for being enrolled in an educational program but there is no incentive for making progress or obtaining a GED.

The average reading levels of man inmates currently in the Maryland prison system are between 5th and 8th grade. Less than half of these inmates have a high school diploma when they enter the correctional system. According to a report published by the Abell Foundation in 2017, it discussed how education is associated with higher rates of employment after release. Re-entering society after incarceration presents a formidable set of challenges. In addition to reconnecting with family and community, successful transition after imprisonment requires a person not only to avoid criminal activity, but also to obtain and sustain employment. Those best able to navigate this process have developed skills and credentials while incarcerated that are valued by potential employers, training programs, and colleges. In fact, a substantial body of evidence also indicates that returning citizens who receive high-quality educational services and supports re-enter their communities, obtain jobs, and become contributing members of society.

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Senate Bill 971 seeks to establish a one-time diminution credit to reduce the term of confinement of an inmate that earns their GED or high school diploma, complete a literacy skills program, post-secondary certificate or degree, or two-year or four-year college degree.

By passing this legislation, Maryland will join 13 other states in offering diminution credit bonuses for educational achievement and decrease recidivism rates. Therefore, we respectfully urge a **favorable** report of Senate Bill 971.

GBC_FAV_SB971

Uploaded by: Fry, Donald

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE**SENATE BILL 971 -- CORRECTIONAL SERVICES – DIMINUTION CREDITS - EDUCATION****March 5, 2020****DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE****POSITION: Support**

Senate Bill 971 authorizes a one-time diminution credit to reduce the term of confinement of an inmate who successfully obtains a certificate of completion for an intermediate high academic certificate, a technical or vocational training program, a state high school diploma by examination, a high school diploma, an associate degree or a bachelor's degree.

One of the best ways to ensure that someone is successful upon release from incarceration is to provide education and skills training during incarceration, or “inside the fence”. Program analysis performed by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy indicate strong positive outcomes for individuals who participate in correctional education and vocational training programs. Their benefit-cost analyses show a return on investment of almost \$10 for every \$1 spent on basic correctional education with a jump to \$19 for every \$1 spent in post-secondary correctional education. Many programs currently exist in Maryland, including job training through Maryland Correctional Enterprises, educational programming through the Goucher Prison Education Partnership, and other programs run by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. However, incarcerated individuals do not always take advantage of the programs available to them.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is committed to supporting policy proposals that have the potential to increase public safety and help returning citizens avoid recidivism. To address this important issue, the GBC created the Coalition for a Second Chance, a group of experts from the public and private sectors charged with examining barriers to employment for those returning to society from a period of incarceration, as well as other policy issues tied to reentry to these individuals. In December 2016, the Coalition for a Second Chance published a report, *Opening Doors to a Second Chance*, focused on improving job prospects for returning citizens and ensuring their success after leaving incarceration. The report concluded that education attainment is a major barrier for workers with a criminal record seeking jobs.

Senate Bill 971 seeks to incentivize incarcerated individuals to take advantage of the educational programming offered to them by granting one-time diminution credits if the inmate successfully obtains either a certificate of completion from a technical or vocational training program, a high school diploma or diploma by examination, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. If successful, this incentive could have a meaningful impact on improving inmates' ability to enter the workforce upon release.

Additionally, Senate Bill 971 is consistent with the GBC's 2020 Legislative Priorities which call on policymakers to adopt a coordinated approach that reduces violent crime while simultaneously addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, joblessness, and lack of education or workforce training. The priorities specifically call for increased efforts to implement programs that provide access to rehabilitative treatment, education, and workforce training.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

111 South Calvert Street • Suite 1700 • Baltimore, Maryland • 21202-6180

(410) 727-2820 • www.gbc.org

For the reasons stated above, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 971.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 65-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

Steurer_FAV_SB 971

Uploaded by: Jenkins, Dave

Position: FAV

SUPPORT SB 971 & SB 922

Testimony presented to the House Judiciary Committees

By *Stephen J. Steurer, PhD* - February 25, 2020

Good afternoon members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.

Most of my professional adult life has been devoted to education of incarcerated adult and juveniles. My entire teaching career has been in public teaching or administering programs in Washington, DC and Maryland high schools, prisons, juvenile facilities and county jails. Over a decade ago, I retired from Maryland state service after serving as the Academic Education Coordinator for Correctional Education at the Maryland State Department of Education 30 years. In addition, I was the Executive Director of the national non-profit professional Correctional Education Association for 29 years until 2015. Today my role is primarily as a volunteer and advocate for education for the incarcerated for Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform and Maryland Correctional Education Advocates.

Why is correctional education important? The reason is simple, education reduces recidivism and changes the lives of former offenders. The 2013-2014 RAND Corporation research of correctional education underpins the societal and financial benefits of correctional education. The conclusion of the RAND research study *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education*, (https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html) is that it significantly lowers ex-offender recidivism and not only pays for itself but also provides a very substantial return on our tax dollars.

Is Maryland utilizing education programs behind bars effectively? And are we providing for adequate programming? The answer is clearly no. There are many devoted state employees in the Correctional Education program now run by the Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation but the actual number of teachers and programs has dropped and the total of academic and vocational program student completions has declined significantly in the last 15 to 20 years. The Abell Foundation 2017 study of Maryland incarcerated students illustrates some of the numbers. Even though the inmate population has doubled since 1982 we are not serving larger numbers of inmate students. There are fewer teachers in the state facilities than there were two decades ago. And the annual GED completion numbers have dropped from a high of around 1,000 in the late 1990s and early 2000s to a little over 300 in fiscal year 2019. While some of the decrease is due to the increased difficulty of the newer GED 2014 exam the number of students attending school has also dropped more percentagewise than the drop in inmate population. Classes are no longer full and waiting lists for school have all but disappeared. The percentage of Maryland prisoners without a high school diploma is around 50% and most of them have little or no gainful career training history. According to the 2017 Abell study of Maryland's correctional education programs only 15% of inmates participated in education in 2016. That means most prisoners who need education and job training do not receive any. Unfortunately, the researchers were not able to obtain much more detail from the correctional system about the educational programs to evaluate the overall quality and effectiveness for those students who do participate. Given personal experience we strongly believe it is not the quality but lack of a systematic effort to encourage and motivate prisoners to become students.

What are the reasons for low participation and completion? There are at least two causes for the low participation and completion rates. First, at intake the correctional system does not adequately assess and take

Maryland Correctional Education Enhancement Advocates John P. Linton johnplinton@gmail.com
410-707-9996, Brad Keller b.keller@myactv.net 240-675-7755, H. David Jenkins, PhD
hdavidjenkins@gmail.com, Stephen J. Steurer PhD sjsteurer@gmail.com 443-474-1196

into consideration an individual's education history or work status and use existing information as a consistent part of ongoing reentry program planning. In 2018 Senate Bill 1137 was passed and signed by the Governor to improve the assessment of education and work history on each person coming into the Division of Correction in order to improve individual reentry plans. To our knowledge the DOC has not attempted to implement the provisions of this law. Secondly, the incentives for inmates for educational participation are no better than prison maintenance jobs. In fact, many menial jobs pay more than the stipend for educational participation. Literally residents sweeping floors receive just as much good time reduction of sentence and a daily stipend as those attending education programs. Three decades ago, educational participation was treated as a special program awarding students an extra 5 days per month off their sentence for attendance. The waiting lists at most institutions were very long as a result. Unfortunately, the number of special programs eligible for the sentence reduction has increased many times over and school lists and participation have fallen dramatically, as a result. How can we expect high school drop-outs whose previous school experiences were negative to come to school without additional motivators?

What are our proposals? The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) and Maryland Correctional Education Enhancement Advocates (MCEEA) endorse SB 971 & SB 922 which are likely to improve the educational outcomes of Maryland prisoners, to enhance public safety and, subsequently, to save on the costs of future incarceration. These identical bills authorize the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Department of Labor and License Regulations to establish time-off-sentence incentives for the attainment of major educational milestones such as attainment of basic literacy skills, a high school diploma, career technical certifications or even AA and BA college degrees. These measures will encourage more inmates to become serious students and, at the same time, the state will save money by the earlier release of people who are prepared to enter the job market with credentials for well-paying jobs.

The 2017 report of the Abell Foundation identifies the untapped potential of correctional education in Maryland to improve criminal justice outcomes. That report, *Prison Education, Maximizing the Potential for Employment and Successful Community Reintegration* (www.abell.org/publications/prison-education), recommended an enhanced incentive system. SB 971 & SB 922 encourage an improved planning system and authorizes the creation of just such an incentive system.

Finally, we understand that there is another bill supported by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to increase mandatory education participation from 120 to 240 days. We do not believe that that bill and ours to provide incentives for participation contradict each other. As we wrote to Public Safety Secretary Rob Green earlier this session, "We are asking DPSCS and MAJR to team up to motivate more Maryland prisoners to attend and complete school. Putting these two bills together is a real one-two punch at the problem."

According to the Council of State Legislatures at least 17 states have adopted better collections of data for program planning along with a similar system of diminution awards or time-off-sentence credits for educational milestone attainment. They include California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee and others, big and small states representing both Democratic and Republican legislators. There has been no fiscal impact reported for diminution systems, but the criminal justice system savings for the Maryland taxpayer from enhancing education programs will be significant and real.

Maryland Correctional Education Enhancement Advocates John P. Linton johnplinton@gmail.com
410-707-9996, Brad Keller b.keller@myactv.net 240-675-7755, H. David Jenkins, PhD
hdavidjenkins@gmail.com, Stephen J. Steurer PhD sjsteurer@gmail.com 443-474-1196

FAIR_FAV_SB971

Uploaded by: Jones, Brenda

Position: FAV



Families Advocating
Intelligent Registries

PO Box 8402 Elkridge, MD 21075 ♥ 800-708-8535 ♥ info@fairregistry.org

SB 971
In Favor

Favorable Response to SB 971 **Correctional Services – Diminution Credits – Education Milestones**

Families Advocating Intelligent Registries (FAIR) has a special concern for persons accused and convicted of sexual offenses, and seeks rational, constitutional sexual offense laws and policies. We fully support SB 971's opportunity for all former offenders to improve themselves while incarcerated.

Diminution credit for educational achievement is an excellent, proven incentive for incarcerated persons. It opens doors once they are released, and provides a strong motivation for good behavior behind prison walls. SB 971 would provide a small deduction in prison time in return for earning a number of certifications, diplomas and degrees. As anyone counting the hours until release can tell you, any reduction is a huge incentive.

Nearly all offenders are eventually released into our communities, and thus we are well-served to offer incentives behind the wire for persons to develop skills and knowledge that will help them become productive citizens. SB 971 gives that opportunity, with 60 days of dim credit even for persons with violent offenses, and 90 days of credit for nonviolent ones.

To conclude, FAIR is highly supportive of offering diminution credit for completion of educational goals and encourages this committee to vote in favor of SB 971.

Sincerely,

Brenda V. Jones, Executive Director
Families Advocating Intelligent Registries

Keller_FAV_SB 971

Uploaded by: Keller, Brad

Position: FAV

SUPPORT SB 971 & SB 922

The Honorable Senator Will Smith
Chair of Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Smith and Committee Members:

I would like to ask for your support for SB 971 & SB 922. This legislation would allow the Maryland Division of Corrections to establish a reward for inmates that successfully complete educational assignment's such as earning a GED or successfully completing occupational training.

During my 25 ½ years as a correctional principal, I learned that the inmate population is largely illiterate and not prepared to re-enter society and be successful with gaining employment. The average inmate waiting to enter my school read around the 5th grade level. Most inmates have failed school for one reason or another. Many have bad memories about their school failures. We can force some inmates to attend school and others we cannot force to enter school. This bill would encourage more inmates to enter and successfully complete school.

We know from numerous studies that inmates who are successful with educational programs in prison are less likely to return. This benefits the individual, their families, our society and reduces state expenditures through a reduction in recidivism.

I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brad H. Keller
18929 Maple Valley Circle
Hagerstown, MD 21742
b.keller@myactv.net
240-675-7755

Jill Carter_FAV_SB 971

Uploaded by: Senator Carter, Senator Carter

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0971 - Correctional Services – Diminution Credits –
Education
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
on March 5, 2020**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

These bills, SB 971 and its companion bill SB 922, seek to address the problems of mass incarceration and recidivism while reducing the overall cost to the taxpayer of incarceration.

Both of these bills authorize diminution credits to reduce the term of confinement of an inmate who earns certain educational certificates, diplomas, or degrees. SB 922 passed the Senate last session but did not make it out of the House Judiciary Committee. Either of these bills would award an inmate 90 days of diminution for completing specific educational programs.

The difference between the bills is who would be entitled to these credits. SB 922 would allow inmates except those serving a sentence for specific sex offenses the full 90 days credit. SB 971 awards 60 days only to prisoners convicted of statutorily defined crimes of violence and sex offenses. All others would be given the full 90 days credit.

Under current law, certain inmates can earn up to 30 diminution credits per month for being enrolled in an educational program. However, there are currently no incentives for completing such a program. These bills would rectify that.

According to DPSCS, Maryland spends an estimated \$3,700 per prisoner monthly. An inmate earning these credits saves the taxpayer \$11,100. A recent Rand Corporation study shows that every one dollar spent on correctional education saves as much as five dollars on incarceration and other costs to the community due to recidivism. As highlighted in the fiscal note, this bill would help reduce the burden on taxpayers while encouraging inmates to seek educational opportunities, and obtain meaningful employment upon release. In addition, passage of this legislation would place Maryland alongside 13 other states that offer diminution credits to inmates for educational achievement.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0971.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill P. Carter