

Senate Bill 86

Date: January 14, 2021
Committee: Senate Finance
Bill Title: *Correctional Education – Changes in Mandatory Education Requirement*
Re: Letter of Support

SB 86, *Correctional Education – Changes in Mandatory Education Requirement* proposes increasing the mandatory school requirement for non-exempt inmates from 120 calendar days to 240 calendar days, or until a Maryland High School Diploma is achieved, whichever comes first. This will enable increased participation in programming, limiting inmate idle time and increasing the likelihood of successful reentrance to society.

The Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) oversees academic, occupational, and transitional programming throughout prisons in the State of Maryland and recognizes that varying levels of literacy and numeracy among the inmate population often makes achieving a High School Diploma in 120 calendar days infeasible. The 120 correctional education calendar days outlined in statute actually translates to 80-90 instructional days in practice due to weekends, holidays, lockdowns, etc. If increased to 240 days, it is estimated that this would equate to 160-180 actual days of school. This modification aligns with the Federal Bureau of Prisons mandatory school requirement that stipulates 240 days of attendance.

Maryland's academic Correctional Education programs have some of the highest adult education outcomes in the State, and students achieve more when they remain engaged in school for longer. Of the 524 inmates under the age of 21 served in FY19, only 55 received their High School Diploma. **Many opted out of school after the required 120 calendar days.** Data shows that MD Labor's Correctional Education courses are effective, but additional time would lead to increased success. In FY19, 1,142 of the 2,778 Adult Basic Education students enrolled in academic programming at correctional institutions were at Levels 1 and 2 (the lowest assessed measure), representing 41% that were not yet "GED Ready." However, level-completion rates for these students were 57.2% and 55.6%, significantly higher than the State average of 45.2% and 41.8%. Increased instructional time would allow such students to continue onto Levels 3 and 4 and prepare for the GED test. (FY19 data represents the full picture of an academic year not interrupted by COVID-19).

SB 86 is a reintroduction of SB 70 from the 2020 legislative session, which passed the Senate unanimously. With this information, the Department respectfully asks for a favorable report from the committee and stands ready to answer any questions the committee may have.

For additional information, please contact Andrew Fulginiti at Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov