

**SB0904 - 3.10.22 -- Maryland Higher Education Comm**

Uploaded by: Donald Fry

Position: FAV



# POSITION STATEMENT

## TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

### SENATE BILL 904 – MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION – FORMERLY INCARCERATED YOUTH GRANT PROGRAM – ESTABLISHED

Sponsor – Senator Benson

March 10, 2022

**DONALD C. FRY**  
**PRESIDENT & CEO**  
**GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

#### **Position: Support**

Senate Bill 904 would establish the Formerly Incarcerated Youth Grant Program to provide formerly incarcerated students who receive federal Pell Grants with matching state funds to attend a Maryland postsecondary institution. Grants would be equal to the amount of the federal Pell Grant that the eligible student received up to \$3,000. Eligibility would be limited to state residents under the age of 26 who have been incarcerated and are eligible for federal Pell Grants in that year. The program would be administered by the Office of Financial Assistance within the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the Division of Parole and Probation would provide grant information to individuals who might be eligible.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) contends that expanding access to education, especially for formerly incarcerated individuals, is integral to reducing recidivism. According to a study by Emory University, recidivism rates are inversely proportion to an individual's level of education; recidivism rates for people with an Associate's degree was 13.7%, for a Bachelor's degree 5.6%, and for a Master's degree 0%.

A significant barrier to higher education for formerly incarcerated individuals is the prohibitive costs of enrollment. Senate Bill 904 provides much needed assistance to formerly incarcerated students to overcome that barrier. Making postsecondary education more affordable will provide these individuals with a better chance to obtain and maintain steady employment, which leads to lower recidivism rates, improved public safety, a more robust workforce, and a strengthened economy.

Creating and nurturing a strong workforce is one of the Greater Baltimore Committee's most important priorities. Without a strong workforce, Maryland's economy cannot innovate, grow, and create jobs. The GBC's *Preparing for the Future: A Regional Workforce Development Initiative* was created to ensure that the region's high-growth industries have a pipeline of highly skilled workers who can contribute to future economic growth. A report was released in late 2020 outlining recommendations to meet the workforce needs. Since the report's issuance, the GBC has regularly convened a diverse network of stakeholders to assist in the implementation of the recommendations. A number of the recommendations in the *Preparing for the Future* report involve significant policy reform to reduce education and employment barriers for justice-involved populations. Senate Bill 904 aligns with these recommendations by enabling formerly incarcerated individuals to get the credentials necessary to obtain family supporting occupations and providing economic opportunities.

In addition to its alignment with the *Preparing for the Future* report, Senate Bill 904 is consistent with one of the core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth outlined in the GBC report entitled *Gaining a Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*. A key pillar identified is as follows:

**GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

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**Workforce that is highly-educated and meets Maryland's business needs.** Maryland's secondary and higher education institutions must offer access to quality instruction at all levels and cultivate a workforce that is well-suited to a modern economy and to the specific needs of Maryland's business sectors.

**For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 904.**

*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 67-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.*

**Gaines - SB 904 MOPD favorable .docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: MarTaze Gaines

Position: FAV



**PAUL DeWOLFE**  
PUBLIC DEFENDER

**KEITH LOTRIDGE**  
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

**MELISSA ROTHSTEIN**  
DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

**KRYSTAL WILLIAMS**  
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIVISION

**ELIZABETH HILLIARD**  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIVISION

## **POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**BILL: SB 904 - Maryland Higher Education Commission - Formerly Incarcerated Youth Grant Program - Established**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: 03/10/2022**

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender requests that this Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 904.

My name is MarTaze Gaines and I am the Project Coordinator of 24 and None in the Maryland Office of the Public Defender (OPD). I urge a favorable report on SB 904, which would establish a grant program for formerly incarcerated Maryland youth. If passed, State funds would match any Pell grants (up to \$3,000) awarded to eligible persons.

24 and None is an organization for young people with involvement in the Juvenile Legal System to learn about empowerment for the individual, our community, and skills to assist in community building. Though I am approaching two years in this role, most of my work in the past decade has been with people navigating life after release, including my own peers. The barriers that our community faces as they return home are almost innumerable. It is our duty to **do more** especially as we shed more light on the truths that our Juvenile Legal System compounds the negative outcomes that our world attributes to those of marginalized identities, especially Black and Brown people, girls, women, and femmes, and queer people across the spectrum.

With this legislation, we are able to reduce barriers by providing more support to young people trying to change their lives. At 24 and None, we will continue our support of young people in their endeavors to change the world, including through higher education. Money is not the sole solution for our communities' needs but this bill will support the reduction of economic barriers to those things like education that should be treated as rights, not as privileges.

For these reasons, we at 24 and None urge this Committee to issue a favorable report for Senate Bill 904.

**Submitted By: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Juvenile Division**

**Authored by: MarTaze Gaines, M.Ed, [martaze.gaines@maryland.gov](mailto:martaze.gaines@maryland.gov)**

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# **Testimony- SB 904 Maryland Higher Education Commis**

Uploaded by: Senator Joanne C. Benson

Position: FAV

JOANNE C. BENSON  
*Legislative District 24*  
Prince George's County

Finance Committee

*Joint Committees*

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight

Management of Public Funds

Protocol



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson

SB 904: Maryland Higher Education Commission - Formerly Incarcerated Youth Grant Program – Established

Good afternoon Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and The Budget and Taxation Committee members. I am here to present SB904 Maryland Higher Education Commission - Formerly Incarcerated Youth Grant Program - Established.

This legislation is essential to provide better access to higher education for at-risk youth. The school-to-prison pipeline is something that many youths have encountered. This pipeline alludes to the school's disciplinary procedures, such as suspensions or expulsions. These practices remove the student from the learning environment and places them in the juvenile criminal justice system. In addition, students of color and students with disabilities are most impacted by these policies. They are disproportionately suspended and expelled at a higher rate than their counterparts. Once young people are incarcerated as youth, they are very likely to be incarcerated as adults. The need to decrease the chance of youth becoming re-incarcerated as they reach adulthood requires infrastructure to be put into place. There needs to be access to higher education no matter the adolescents' past.

This bill's purpose is to lay out a Formerly Incarcerated Youth Grant Program to be administered by the Office of Student Financial Assistance inside the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The establishment of this program is vital in allowing our formerly incarcerated youth a better chance at higher education. Higher education will deter them from going down the wrong path and open them to many opportunities for a better future.

Thus, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for SB904.