



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 785 – BALTIMORE CITY – DISTRICT COURT – JOBS COURT PILOT PROGRAM

Sponsor – Delegate Lewis

February 15, 2022

DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Support with Amendments

House Bill 785 would establish the Jobs Court Pilot Program in the District Court of Baltimore City. The purpose of the program is to reduce recidivism by offering defendants an opportunity to participate in full time job training and job placement programs as a condition of probation, an alternative to incarceration, or a condition of pretrial release. The Administrative Office of the Courts is required to develop a plan to implement and monitor the program.

According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice, Maryland's recidivism rate is 40 percent. The GBC contends that this number is unacceptably high and significant policy changes must be made to reduce it. Investment in job training is a proven, data supported method. Increased access to job training and job placement programs is a needed investment in the effort to reduce recidivism. This is especially true in our most at-risk communities.

While the GBC supports increased investment, requiring the Administrative Office of the Courts to develop and monitor a completely new program is not the most efficient use of limited resources. Baltimore has a substantial existing network of advocacy organizations and nonprofits dedicated to reducing recidivism and helping formerly incarcerated individuals obtain employment, as well as numerous existing training programs. A partnership between the District Court and these existing organizations would eliminate duplication of efforts and allow each party to focus on its core mission. The GBC would propose an amendment to House Bill 785 to facilitate a partnership between the Administrative Office of Courts and existing organizations providing job training and assistance for justice-involved citizens, rather than requiring the Administrative Office of the Courts to create a brand new program.

This bill is consistent with one of the key tenets in *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report published by the GBC that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth:

Government leadership that unites with business as a partner. Maryland leaders must set a welcoming tone that communicates positive support for business, respect for the private sector as a partner, not an adversary, and reflects a strategic plan for business growth and job creation.

The GBC respectfully requests that the Judiciary Committee report House Bill 785 favorably with the proposed amendment.

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.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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