



House Bill 536

Correctional Services Apprenticeship Start-Up Grant Program - Establishment

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Economic Matters and
Judiciary Committees

Date: February 21, 2024

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 536. This bill seeks to bolster the corrections workforce across Maryland, where recruitment remains remarkably challenging. The bill expands federal and state grant funding for qualifying apprenticeships in local detention centers seeking to establish a corrections apprenticeship program. Funding can be awarded to qualifying jurisdictions for up to \$500,000.

Local detention centers are the cornerstone of rehabilitation efforts within the public safety workforce. The individuals who serve sentences in these county facilities are usually detained for low level crimes. As an individual's criminal activity tends to escalate, they can develop behaviors that become more difficult to correct over time. Due to the nature of crimes for the sentenced population of a local detention center, these are programs with the most potential to correct behaviors before they escalate. For these rehabilitative successes, counties must rely on a robust, engaged, and enthusiastic contingent of officers as well as administrative and medical staff to provide support, services, and guidance.

Recruitment and retention for these professions in local detention centers are at historic lows. Younger generations struggle to see a viable career and future for themselves in state or local detention center positions. Apprenticeship programs have the potential to help curious and compassionate candidates learn about these types of careers firsthand, and not through misleading myths and sensationalized media. This bill establishes a pathway and resource potential that detention centers can use to help rebuild a qualified pipeline of new employees looking to make a difference in local government.

Counties appreciate the effort to consider these types of public safety professions and ways to invest in and develop lasting workforce solutions. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 536.