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Testimony in Support of House Bill 612 Correctional Education and Workforce Skills Training Programs – State Correctional Ombudsman and Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training Program for Incarcerated Individuals

On behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR)

Before the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Hearing 2.19.26 at 2pm

February 17, 2026

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) submits this testimony in strong support of House Bill 612: Correctional Education and Workforce Skills Training Programs – State Correctional Ombudsman and Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training Program for Incarcerated Individuals.

MAJR is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2,000 Marylanders who advocate for evidence-based legislative and policy reforms to Maryland's correctional system.

HB 612 recognizes that education and workforce training are among the most effective tools for reducing recidivism, supporting successful reentry, and promoting long-term public safety. Most importantly, this bill would improve and strengthen the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training Program for Incarcerated Individuals. This bill creates a budget line item for the existing CPRS program, ensuring that it would have a permanent place within the prisons and would no longer rely solely on year-to-year grant funding.

I have been teaching in the Second Chance Pell Grant Program at Jessup Correctional Institution (and other prisons) for ten years and have had many students who have undergone and completed the rigorous CPRS program, which includes 500 hours of documented supervised service. They are typically highly motivated people who have themselves experienced substance use difficulties and have learned how to overcome them, making them better able than most to help others with these problems. This bill offers a certification that translates into real job opportunities after an incarcerated person is released.

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, Inc.

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A 501c(4) Non-profit Advocacy Organization

HB 612 is one of the recommendations put forward by the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission, created in 2024 by the Maryland Legislature to improve correctional education and occupational training. MAJR strongly recommends that the House Judiciary Committee give it a favorable report.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Judith Lichtenberg
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