Career Technology and Workforce Development

Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2025
9am-10am

Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Adam Cummings, Ainsley Moench, Amanda Owens, Diana Bailey, John Griffin, Renee Yarbough-Williams, Tanja Murphy, Tyrese Brooks

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I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 9am.

II. Approval of February 27th meeting minutes

The February 27th, 2025 meeting minutes were approved. Workgroup members introduced themselves. Adam Cummings announced he would be taking a new position at the Correctional Ombudsman's Office and new appointments to the Commission from Maryland Correctional Enterprises would have to be made.

III. Presentation on data from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center

Ainsley Moench went over the presentation containing data from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center on employment outcomes post-release.

The first chart detailed how many returning citizens find employment in the first year of release by program. Adam Cummings asked what the difference was between transitional certificates and occupational/national certificates. Ainsley Moench replied that transitional certificates are granted after completing a transitional class, such as a financial literacy or parenting class, and classes do not require a GED. Occupational and national certificates are given upon completion of an occupational course, such as automotive technology or barber stylist programs, and require a GED to enroll. Adam Cummings commented that very few returning citizens found employment in all four fiscal quarters in the year after release, and asked for feedback as to why that might be. Ainsley Moench responded that finding employment after immediate release is difficult.

The second chart detailed how many returning citizens find employment three years post-release by program. Tanja Murphy echoed Adam Cummings' question and asked what the systematic barriers to continued employment might be. Diana Bailey mentioned that since COVID, GED numbers have decreased, which affects how many incarcerated individuals can take classes. Diana Bailey also asked what the timeframe of the data was, and Ainsley Moench replied that it was 2018 to 2022. Tyrese Brooks added that wages may result in high turnover as wages are not enough to sustain an individual or family, especially with the added stigma of being a returning citizen.

The third chart details how completing different correctional education programs affects employment in the first year post-release. Tanja Murphy commented that it was interesting to see that different programs did not make a significant difference. Ainsley Moench commented that one caveat to the data is that National/Occupational certificates require a GED, so labelling someone as not having a correctional education GED does not indicate that they do not have a GED.

The fourth chart details how completing different correctional education programs affects employment in the third year post-release.

The fifth chart details the wages of incarcerated individuals who obtain employment upon release. Adam Cummings asked if the $51,000 Maryland living wage cutoff was for a single individual, and Ainsley Moench answered yes. Adam Cummings pointed out that lots of returning citizens have families.

The sixth chart details where returning citizens are finding employment one year post-release. Adam Cummings asked why administrative and waste management jobs are categorized the same, and Ainsley Moench responded that that is a Department of Labor distinction, and she would look into it. John Griffin offered that many returning citizens may be garbage collectors, as that industry is friendly to hiring them. John Griffin asked if the data was specific to Maryland, and Ainsley Moench answered yes.

Tanja Murphy expressed an interest in finding out how to get returning citizens higher-paid jobs, as most returning citizens are not obtaining a living wage upon release. John Griffin responded that he has observed employer bias against returning citizens, with many employers not wanting to hire them. HR departments also routinely screen out those who are on parole and probation. Additionally, workforce programs train entry-level skills in competitive fields. Instructors would like to teach higher-level skills, but they are restricted to only entry-level classes.

Tanja Murphy asked if the state had something similar to the Federal Bonding Incentive. Tanja Murphy answered that the state does, and Diana Bailey added that Maryland was limited in the number of bonds it could buy due to budget cuts. However, even tax credits and bonding initiatives are not likely to incentivize employers who do not want to hire returning citizens.
Ainsley Moench asked if there were any licensure barriers with the currently offered classes. John Griffin replied that with many of the trades– including Certified Peer Recovery Specialists–, licensing is not an issue, but employer bias is.

Adam Cummings commented that even high levels of education do not matter if employers are not willing to hire returning citizens. John Griffin said that even though employment and living wages are still an issue, those without education are more likely to come back to prison, especially with longer sentences. Corrections officials agree that the best way to prevent recidivism is through education and mental programming.

Diana Bailey offered that a strong message from the Governor would help reduce employer bias. Before COVID, Chambers of Commerce would do career fairs inside the facilities to do career fairs, but those services have been cut.

IV. Data Updates

A. Ask for information

Ainsley Moench asked if Maryland Correctional Enterprises has any post-release employment data. Adam Cummings replied that all post-release follow-up was done by someone who is now retired. The data was anecdotal and relied on returning citizens to contact them. MCE does not have any authority to reach out and follow-up; the Division of Parole and Probation is responsible for that data.

Tyrese Banks asked if there was an issue with getting information from case management. Adam Cummings replied that information is hard to obtain and not kept accurately. Case management also set their own guidelines that may not be MCE rule. Tanja Murphy added that she and Daneille Cox are working on a grant to track higher education and occupational students post-release, but that grant funding is limited, and would only be given for three years and in three targeted areas.

Tanya Murphy asked how to encourage returning citizens to volunteer to be tracked post-release. John Griffin answered that the key is simply asking them if they would like to be tracked, as that is not the current practice. The Division of Parole and Probation does not readily share data, most likely due to security concerns. Many people would be willing to share their successes if asked. Adam Cummings

added that it is the responsibility of Parole and Probation to document employment outcomes, and wondered what is being done with the data. John Griffin replied he did not know, but perhaps Parole and Probation are using it to determine when to stop supervising someone. Adam Cummings proposed that one of the recommendations from the Commission should be to get Parole and Probation to allow others to look at their data. John Griffin agreed and said that evaluating programs would help reduce recidivism and lessen employer bias.

B. Legislative updates

Ainsley Moench gave an update on House Bill 877, which extends the timeframe of the Commission to 2029.

Diana Bailey asked if there was any update on the bill surrounding the women's pre-release center, and Ainsley Moench responded that it had passed the House and was moving onto the Senate.

Renee Yarbough-Williams updated everyone on Del. Cheryl Pasteur's House Bill 853, which would give some incarcerated individuals a second look at their sentences.

V. Next meeting: April 24, 2025 from 10am-11am

Diana Bailey thanked everyone for their time. Ainsley Moench announced that the next meeting on April 24th would start at 10am instead of 9am.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54am.