Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2025
10am-11:30am

Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Ainsley Moench, Dr. Stephen Steurer, Dr. Andrea Cantora, Alyssa Fieo, Danielle Cox, Anne Bocchini Pack, Judith Lichtenberg, Mary Gable, John Feaster III, Ramieka Robinson, Delegate Karen Simpson, Gordon Pack, Ruschelle Reuben, Jessica Johnson, Jamel Freeman, John Griffin

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I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 10:03am.

II. Housekeeping

A. Approval and discussion of minutes from June 5, 2025

The meeting minutes were approved.

B. Distribution of final interim report

Ainsley Moench announced that the interim report was approved by the governor's office and is available on the website. It has been sent to the Governor, Speaker of the House, Senate President, and Department of Legislative Services. The report is available on the Commission website and DropBox.

C. Reminder for July correctional institution visits

Ainsley Moench reminded the commission that sign-ups for prison visits are closed. The first visit to MCTC and RCI will be Monday, July 14th. The second visit to MCI-W and JCI will be Tuesday, July 29th. The third visit to ECI-E and ECI-W will be on July 30th. Attendees were reminded to send their state ID, driver’s license, and if they will be bringing a notebook/pen to Ainsley Moench for security clearance.

III. Updates on workgroup priorities

A. Higher Education

Dr. Andrea Cantora identified five priority areas for the November report: statewide coordination, funding, space, technology, and incentives. Research is being conducted into other statewide coalitions, such as their funding, operations, and if any legislative action was taken to form them. Research is also being conducted surrounding if other states have state tuition assistance or scholarships for incarcerated students. Goucher Prison Education Partnership is piloting the use of trailers to aid in space concerns. Danielle Cox has been improving technology and incentives, and these advancements will be highlighted in the annual report.

B. Career Technology and Workforce Development

Ainsley Moench discussed the workgroup priorities for Career Technology and Workforce Development: data collection and sharing in alignment with career outcomes, licensure, and transitional instruction. The workgroup received data from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center in March that emphasized the need to align occupational programming offered inside to labor market outcomes. The group will also be looking into licensure barriers for individuals with criminal histories. The data from MLDSC also displayed positive career outcomes for correctional education students who take transitional courses. Barriers to employment were noted as a focus for the Task Force on the Creation of a Division of Returning Citzens and Expanded Reentry Services, with the Commission focusing on the top three priorities but collaborating where possible.

C. ABE/GED/SPED

Alyssa Fieo emphasized the need to obtain a copy of the revised Special Education Policies and Procedures as well as the recent compliance monitoring report from the Maryland Department of Education, and asked Mary Gable if she could assist with obtaining a copy. Mary Gable said she would request a copy of the two documents. Alyssa Fieo pointed out that there is a low number of students with disabilities who are passing the GED, and there is a discrepancy in the number of special education students reported and the annual CEC reports. She noted that the highest number of special education students are Other Health Impaired, which indicates they may have ADHD and are not recieving

medication. John Feaster III confirmed that policies and procedures are near completion and preliminary audit findings are available, but a formal request from the commission would be needed. Dr. Stephen Steurer requested Alyssa Fieo to email him and Ainsley Moench specific requests for these documents.

Dr. Stephen Steurer went over the issues for Adult Basic Education and GED: school closures, completions and enrollment, youth transition from high school to GED, incentives, and mandatory education. Current law on mandatory education states students must have 240 calendar days, but the Commission may want to recommend changing that to actual school days.

D. Workplan for Annual Report

Dr. Stephen Steurer went over the workplan and timeline for the November annual report. Each recommendation from the Commission should include: background, current practice/applicable law, specific description of the issue, best practices from other states, description of the recommendation, and success metrics. Recommendations may require legislation, though other recommendations may be implemented administratively. Ainsley Moench noted that not all priorities will be accomplished by November, as the commission is extended until 2029. The goal is 1-3 solid recommendations. Dr. Stephen Steurer suggested a draft by November 1st for finalization.

IV. Discussion on central purpose of Commission

Dr. Stephen Steurer discussed the future work of the Commission, which will include looking at best practices for the structure of prison education delivery. Dr. Lois Davis from the RAND Corporation is scheduled to present in August on best practices, followed by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy on models of prison education delivery. The goal is to develop a better, more cooperative system for education delivery. In addition to the recommendations from the three workgroups, the Commission may have a recommendation on the overall structure of prison education by the November meeting.

Delegate Karen Simpson noted that November 1st is the deadline for filing early legislative bills, and while the commission's report might be later, individual legislators can still use developed ideas for proposals. Delegate Simpson also expressed confidence in finding senators to cross-file any proposed legislation.

V. Open Discussion

Alyssa Fieo asked about obtaining feedback from incarcerated students, particularly those with disabilities, to assess if their needs are met.

Ramieka Robinson-Peoples requested the use of human-centered language (e.g., "incarcerated people," "students who are incarcerated") instead of "inmate."

Ainsley Moench confirmed intent to talk to students during prison visits and the importance of surveying them. Gordon Pack suggested gathering feedback through classes or instructors. Danielle Cox clarified that formal surveys of the incarcerated population require pre-approval through the DPSCS research division, which is a lengthy process (months). She offered to share information on the approval process and application link. Ann Bocchini Pack suggested conducting post-release surveys at DPP intake offices, arguing that individuals would be more likely to provide honest feedback after release due to fear of retribution while incarcerated. Danielle Cox agreed with this approach, noting it avoids the lengthy approval process. Dr. Stephen Steurer proposed creating a small group to develop a survey tool for both in-prison and post-release feedback. John Griffin suggested incarcerated individuals would be willing to speak in an office with visitors, similar to a case management meeting, with cooperation from institutional education staff. Danielle Cox noted this is currently not happening for this commission.

Danielle Cox and Dr. Stephen Steurer went over additional logistics for the correctional institution visits.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15am.

Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission Meeting

Date: July 10, 2025

Attendees:

1. Meeting Start and Quorum

- Ainsley Moench initiated the meeting.
- Stephen Steurer confirmed a quorum was present.

2. Minutes Approval

- The June 2025 minutes were approved without objection, following a motion by Andrea Cantora.

3. Interim Report Distribution

- Ainsley Moench announced that the interim report was approved by the governor's office, reviewed without content changes, and is now available on the website. The report was sent to the governor, the speaker of the house, the senate president, and the Department of Legislative Services.

4. Upcoming Prison Visits

- Ainsley Moench reminded the commission about upcoming prison visits for which sign-ups are closed:
    - July 14th: MCTC and RCI
    - July 29th: MCIW and JCI
    - July 30th: ECI
- Participants were urged to submit their IDs and notebook preferences for security clearance.

- Stephen Steurer noted that approximately eight people are signed up for each visit to gain firsthand context.

5. Workgroup Updates

None

a. Higher Education Workgroup

* Andrea Cantora outlined five priority areas for the November report: statewide coordination, funding, space, technology, and incentives.

* The workgroup is researching statewide coalitions in other states and exploring innovative uses of space, such as Goucher's trailer pilot at MCIW.

* They will also focus on access to state tuition assistance for incarcerated students and highlight advancements in technology and incentives already led by Danielle Cox -DPSCS-.

b. Career Technology and Workforce Development Workgroup

* Ainsley Moench presented three main priorities: data collection and sharing, licensure issues for individuals with criminal histories, and transitional instruction.

* The workgroup is collaborating with a re-entry task force to address employment barriers for returning citizens.

c. ABGED Special Education Workgroup

*   Alyssa Fieo -OPD- highlighted the need for revised policies and procedures and the final report from MSDE's special education monitoring.

*   Concerns were raised about the low number of students with disabilities passing the GED and discrepancies in publicly reported data.

*   Mary Gable -MSDE- committed to requesting these documents. John Feaster III -LABOR- confirmed that policies and procedures are near completion and preliminary audit findings are available, pending a formal request from the commission.

6. Commission Purpose and Future Presentations

- Stephen Steurer discussed the commission's purpose of evaluating the existing interagency hierarchy for education delivery and identifying best practices.
- Future meetings will feature presentations from experts like Lois Davis from the Rand Corporation and the Minac Center for Public Policy, who will share research and recommendations on effective prison education models and agency configurations.

7. Annual Report Framework and Deadlines

- Ainsley Moench presented the framework for the annual report, due by November 15th. Each workgroup must include background, current practice, applicable law, problem descriptions, best practices, specific recommendations, and success metrics.
- Stephen Steurer emphasized the importance of developing metrics.
- Delegate Karen Simpson noted that a November 1st draft deadline for the report would be past the early filing deadline for legislative proposals, but Stephen Steurer clarified that individual delegates could still use developed ideas for legislation before the final report is out.

8. Legislative Collaboration

- Stephen Steurer emphasized the need for legislative recommendations to be ready by November 15th.
- Delegate Karen Simpson confirmed that commission delegates have good relationships with senators and can find cross-filing sponsors.

9. Incarcerated Student Feedback

- Alyssa Fieo -OPD- inquired about gathering feedback directly from incarcerated students.
- Ramieka Robinson-Peoples advocated for human-centered language, preferring "incarcerated people" or "students who are incarcerated."

- Danielle Cox -DPSCS- explained that direct surveying is difficult due to policy restrictions and potential retribution fears.

10. Post-Release Survey for Feedback

- Anne Bocchini Pack suggested collecting feedback post-release through surveys at DPP intake offices to ensure honest answers and avoid retribution fears.
- Danielle Cox -DPSCS- supported this approach.
- Stephen Steurer agreed to initiate this as an official activity, inviting previously incarcerated members to help develop the survey tool.

11. Commission's Achievements and Future Outlook

- Stephen Steurer expressed satisfaction with the commission's work and the governor's office's positive reception of their report. He anticipates the annual report will further advance their efforts.

12. Carpooling Coordination for Site Visits

- Stephen Steurer offered to carpool to Hagerstown, and Danielle Cox -DPSCS- offered to drive from Mount Airy.
- Ainsley Moench confirmed a list of visitors for the Monday visit would be circulated.

13. Incarcerated Individuals' Willingness to Speak

- Ainsley Moench conveyed that John Griffin indicated incarcerated individuals would be willing to speak with visitors in an office setting, provided cooperation from the institution's education principal and officer in charge.
- Danielle Cox -DPSCS- clarified that direct one-on-one or group engagement with students was not pre-approved, though general questions during class walkthroughs are permitted.

14. Details for MCTC Visit

- Danielle Cox -DPSCS- provided details for the MCTC visit: meeting at 9:00 a.m. for a 10:00 a.m. tour, with classes in session.
- Stephen Steurer advised comfortable walking shoes.
- Danielle Cox -DPSCS- outlined security protocols: personal belongings locked in cars, only IDs, keys, and unbound notebooks with pens allowed, and a casual dress code with specific restrictions for women's clothing.

15. Meeting Adjournment and Next Steps

- The meeting was adjourned, moved by Danielle Cox -DPSCS- and seconded by Gordon Pack.
- The next meeting is scheduled for August 7th. Workgroups will meet in the interim.

Suggested Next Steps:

- Ainsley Moench will send a list of visitors for Monday's prison visit.
- The group will communicate about carpooling arrangements for Monday's visit.
- Stephen Steurer and Danielle Cox -DPSCS- will connect to coordinate their carpool to Mount Airy.