



EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT
an initiative of Education at Illinois

HB 3648 & 3740: Higher Education in Prison, Data Collection and State Aid

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE, IL HOUSE, MARCH 8, 2023

Testimony of Rebecca Ginsburg, EJP Director

My name is Rebecca Ginsburg, and I'm an associate professor in Education Policy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Since 2008 I have directed Illinois' college-in-prison program. I also represent the Freedom to Learn Campaign, a program of the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison.

The 102nd Illinois General Assembly unanimously supported the creation of the Illinois Higher Education in Prison Task Force, which was charged with creating a legislative action plan that would propel Illinois to being a national exemplar of higher education in prison.

I had the honor of serving on that task force, alongside Leader Ammons, Sen. Pacione-Zayas, and other IL policymakers. Our final report listed 31 recommendations.

We now seek legislative action on two of the most important of those recommendations.

First, HB 3648. This is a data collection and reporting bill. It will allow the General Assembly and governor to receive, annually, the quantitative data we need to set an ambitious and well-informed path towards expanding access to and participation in HEP.

Currently, no agency provides reliable data on how many individuals are enrolled in HEP programs, where those individuals are incarcerated, how many degrees they earned, or what race or gender they are. This bill rectifies the situation by setting data collection requirements for both IDOC and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Data collection, analysis, and reporting will allow us to identify key performance indicators so we can measure impact and chart a course for continuous improvement. Data collection is key to data-informed policymaking.

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“Because of the academic and extra curricular opportunities provided to me by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign through the Education Justice Project at Danville C.C., eleven months post-incarceration I’m able to advocate for state policies that treat our incarcerated women and men as human beings. ”

- Marcelo De Jesus Velazquez, EJP alumnus

Second, HB 3740. This bill will amend the Illinois Higher Education Student Assistance Act, which currently excludes programs that serve incarcerated students from being considered “qualified” institutions, thereby barring individuals who participate in college in prison programming from receiving financial assistance, including the state’s Monetary Award Program.

The return on investment far outweighs the cost of expanding MAP. The estimated maximum cost of expanding MAP to incarcerated students in the next academic year is around \$3 million (\$2,966,358), less than 1% of total MAP expenditure. To be precise, it is .71% of total MAP expenditure. The estimated minimum savings in incarceration costs that we expect in the first year alone

is over \$11 million (between \$11,865,432 to \$14,831,790). That’s a minimum net savings [GR1] of over \$8 million in the first year.

In addition to saving the state money, we expect another outcome of amending the Act will be that HEP programming will expand, since funding is a commonly-cited barrier to program growth.

To conclude, we hope you will energetically and strategically pursue implementation of the task force’s well-considered legislative recommendations. HB 3648 and 3740 contain provisions that are vital to thoughtful and cost-effective expansion of HEP, and for that reason key to the transformation of lives and communities across our state. Thank you. We welcome your questions.