

Report on Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Submitted by the Maryland Department of Labor
September 30, 2020

2020 Joint Chairmen’s Report

Pursuant to the requirements of the 2020 Joint Chairmen’s Report, the Maryland Department of Labor (Labor) submits this report addressing the implementation of the Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals. Chapter 432 of 2020 requires a report on the implementation of Chapter 726 of 2019, specifically: (1) the number and types of employers that receive grants under this program; (2) the grant amounts received by each employer; (3) the total number of apprentices and number of apprentices by employer that participated in the program; and (4) the progress in achieving the purposes of the program.

Legislative History

In 2019, House Bill 1167, “Labor and Employment – Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals – Establishment” was enacted under Article II, Section 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution - Chapter 726. This act created a three-year pilot to support Registered Apprenticeship programs in the construction industry that hire Registered Apprentices who (1) have been formerly incarcerated and (2) live in Baltimore City and Dorchester County. The purpose of the pilot is to develop a well-trained, productive construction workforce that meets the needs of the State’s economy; encourage employers to hire formerly incarcerated individuals in the construction industry; and help employers offset additional costs, if any, associated with hiring Registered Apprentices.

In 2020, House Bill 1141, “Labor and Employment - Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals – Report,” was enacted under Article II, Section 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution - Chapter 432. This bill mandates that MD Labor submit a report on the progress of the pilot program to the General Assembly.

Joint Chairmen’s Report Requirements

- I. The number and types of employers that receive grants under this program*
- II. The grant amounts received by each employer*
- III. The total number of apprentices and number of apprentices by employer that participated in the program*
- IV. Progress in achieving the purposes of the program*

As of September 30, 2020, MD Labor has not awarded any grants under this program, but has made progress towards implementation (noted in the section below).

Progress Toward Pilot Implementation

MD Labor is working to fully implement this pilot program as outlined in the 2019 legislation, but has experienced disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the closures of non-essential businesses, the Department's priorities shifted to supporting dislocated workers and responding to the dramatic increase in Unemployment Insurance claims. Additionally, as part of recent budgetary adjustments, the pilot's anticipated \$100,000 allotment for fiscal year 2020 was reduced by half to \$50,000.

Despite the challenges presented by the coronavirus and funding reductions, MD Labor has made progress towards implementing the Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals. MD Labor is actively working to implement the pilot through four main steps:

1. **Develop Regulations** – The Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL), which includes the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program, drafted regulations for the pilot and anticipates they will be published in the Maryland Register for public comment during the Fall of 2020.
2. **Develop a Policy** – DWDAL has a robust policy development process that includes collaboration amongst relevant stakeholders and solicits public feedback (a full explanation of the Division's process is available here: <http://labor.maryland.gov/employment/mpi/mpi1-15.pdf>).

In order to fully implement the pilot, DWDAL convened a meeting on August 20, 2020 with numerous stakeholders including Registered Apprenticeship employers, representatives from the Baltimore City and Upper Shore (including Dorchester County) Local Workforce Development Areas, and MD Labor staff to discuss the project and what information to include in the policy. DWDAL's Policy Unit is currently drafting the document and the stakeholder group meets again in late September 2020 to discuss it.

3. **Education and Outreach** – MD Labor will provide outreach and technical assistance to Registered Apprenticeship employers interested in applying for a grant. Specifically, DWDAL's Reentry Navigators, Registered Apprenticeship Navigators, and Business Services staff will be familiar with this incentive program. They will provide instruction to State and local American Job Center staff to use this program as an outreach tool to incentivize eligible employers to hire individuals who have been formerly incarcerated.
4. **Awards**– In accordance the with regulations and the developed policy, MD Labor will award grants to qualifying employers on a rolling basis, until funds allotted for a given year are fully expended.

For questions or comments regarding this report, please contact:

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