

## House Bill 1141

September 30, 2022

The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor  
State House, 100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Boyd K. Rutherford, Lieutenant Governor  
State House, 100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President  
Senate of Maryland  
State House, H-107  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker  
Maryland House of Delegates  
State House, H-107  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan, Lieutenant Governor Rutherford, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

We are pleased to provide this report as per the provision of House Bill 1141 - Labor and Employment - Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals - Report. This bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to report to the General Assembly on progress of the Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals for the immediately preceding calendar year. MD Labor must compile and submit the report including: the number and types of employers that received grants, the grant amount by employer, and the total number of apprentices and number of apprentices by employer that participated in the program.

Chapter 726 of 2019 established the Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals in MD. The purposes of the program are delineated below.

- to develop a well-trained, productive construction workforce that meets the needs of the State's economy;
- to encourage employers to hire formerly incarcerated individuals in the construction industry; and
- to help employers offset additional costs, if any, associated with hiring apprentices.

As provided in the State budget, MD Labor must administer the pilot program and provide grants on a competitive basis to employers that employ formerly incarcerated apprentices who live in Baltimore City or Dorchester County and meet specified criteria. The grant is a maximum of \$1,000 for each qualified apprentice. An employer is eligible to receive a grant for each formerly incarcerated employee who has worked for the employer for at least seven months, is engaged in a building or construction trade, and lives in Baltimore City or Dorchester County. Additionally, the apprentice must be enrolled in the first year of a registered apprenticeship program.

The Governor must include at least \$100,000 annually in the State budget for fiscal 2021 through 2023 to provide grants to eligible employers and to cover administrative costs. MD Labor has developed and promulgated regulations and policy to govern the program, and anticipated program activity would begin soon after. ([Regulations](#)) ([Policy](#)) However, MD Labor has not awarded any of these funds to date.

In the implementation of this program, staff from the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program team conducted outreach to all the existing Registered Apprenticeship sponsors within the construction trades. Several informational email blasts were utilized so as to inform them of this grant funding opportunity. Staff also reviewed listings for all current Maryland Registered Apprentices, in order to identify those that met the requirements set for this program – namely their being: 1) apprentices within the construction trades, 2) apprentices in their first year of a multi-year program, and 3) apprentices residing in either Baltimore City or Dorchester County. This group of names were then all checked against the public access case records on the Maryland Judiciary Case Search website. This exercise resulted in a determination that the vast majority of the potentially eligible apprentices were not listed as having had prior criminal issues. This research was done solely for informational purposes in order to help staff determine how many eligible apprentices might already be in our system. This was not done with the intention of informing employers about the status of an apprentices' past or notifying employers of potential eligibility.

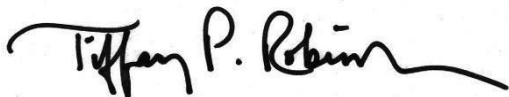
During the activities associated with the implementation of this program, a number of challenges became apparent. In order for this program to be more readily accessible, the issues noted below may need to be addressed.

- The Maryland Judiciary Case Search website, while listing charges and case information, does not definitively state if an individual was ultimately incarcerated or not.
- To date, individuals who may be eligible for this program do not appear to have self-reported as being eligible to their employers. It is possible that individuals may have been fearful of jeopardizing their jobs.
- Employers have not applied for the credit. Reasons for employers not applying could be they may be unaware of its availability, do not inquire about apprentices' prior involvement with the justice system, are unaware of an apprentice's prior involvement with the justice system or are ineligible due to residing outside of Baltimore City or Dorchester County.

Based on our research to date, the fact that only two Maryland jurisdictions are included as being eligible domicile jurisdictions very much limits the potential eligibility for this program. If the statutory language for this program were amended to provide for all Maryland counties and Baltimore City as eligible jurisdictions of residence for this program, the potential for utilization of this program by eligible apprentices would be greatly increased. Additionally, there is merit for the consideration of expanding the industries that eligible Registered Apprentices are working in within the program's eligibility criteria. It could be argued that the ability of a previously incarcerated individual to successfully enter the workforce as a Registered Apprentice has a public policy value, regardless of the industry or occupation they are apprenticing within.

MD Labor is committed to advancing the success of this program.

Best Regards,



Tiffany P. Robinson  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Labor