

Correctional Education Council (CEC) Board Meeting Minutes

April 22, 2026
Google Meet

Council Members

Secretary Carolyn J. Scruggs, Co-Chair, Deputy Secretary Jason Perkins-Cohen, Jack Weber, Jennfier Gauthier, Jessica Johnson, Dr. Kathleen M. Jordan-D'Ambrisi, Sarah Sheppard, Rose Robinson, Walter Sallee, Christina Krabitz

Staff and Guests

David Arnold, Tamara Barron, Ellen Bredt, Danielle Cox, Deron Crawford, Erica DuBose, John Feaster III, Leza Griffith, Tyneshia Heath, Patrick Hruz, Mary Keller, Shakera Lambert, Katharine Lander, Ainsley Moench, Benjamin Mourad, Melissa Murphy, Tanja Murphy, Kari Pompilli, Ellen Rappaport, Tawanda Redding, Stacey Royal, Amy Sines, Matthew Strine, Terenda Thomas, Frances Tracy-Mumford

Absent

Rachel Stephens Parker, Mary Ann Thompson

Opening

Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) Deputy Secretary, Jason Perkins-Cohen called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) Secretary Carolyn J. Scruggs thanked members for their continued support of the DPSCS educational needs and highlighted the Georgetown University graduation at MCIW, noting the role of correctional education partners in supporting student achievement. Deputy Secretary Perkins-Cohen acknowledged the close of the legislative session, described it as productive, and thanked the participating teams for their ongoing work.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from December 10th, 2025 were reviewed and approved unanimously.

Open Meetings Act

Acting Director of Correctional Education, Dr. Jessica Johnson, reviewed Open Meetings Act requirements and noted that CEC meetings must remain accessible to members of the public. She stated that meeting materials had been shared in advance and would continue to be distributed. She also shared the possibility of alternating between in-person and virtual meetings while maintaining virtual access.

Role of CEC and Introductions of CEC Members

DPSCS Director of Education Programs, Danielle Cox, reviewed the statutory role of the CEC, including its responsibility to advocate for educational programs, workforce skills training, equitable access, program quality, curriculum, instructional materials, and needed improvements across correctional institutions. Acting Director Johnson then invited members to introduce themselves and describe the perspectives they bring to the CEC. Members shared experience from correctional education, public safety, workforce development, reentry services, public education, nonprofit programming, student supports, and business engagement. Acting Director Johnson and Director Cox emphasized the value of member input, collaboration, and using future meetings to move beyond program updates toward shared problem-solving and planning.

Post Secondary Programs

Director Cox provided an overview of postsecondary education programs offered within correctional institutions, including current and planned programs through Goucher College, the University of Baltimore, Georgetown University, Bowie State University, Towson University, Anne Arundel Community College, and Hagerstown Community College. She noted recent federal approvals for several prison education programs and described efforts to expand access by region and institution. Director Cox also highlighted the importance of aligning programs with labor market needs, credential value, reentry planning, and continued educational pathways after release.

Director Cox reported that DPSCS hired three Education and Employment Specialists through a Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance Act grant. She explained that the specialists will support postsecondary students beginning two years prior to release and continuing for one year post-release, with their time divided between facility-based and community-based work. The specialists will help develop reentry plans focused on education and employment goals, connect students with colleges, MD Labor reentry navigators, American Job Centers, housing, transportation, child care, parole and probation, and other supports needed for successful reentry.

Deputy Secretary Perkins-Cohen asked how the job placement function would connect with Labor and local workforce partners, noting the need to prioritize employment assistance for occupational program graduates where training investments have been made. Director Cox clarified that the initial focus will be higher education students because of the limited number of specialists, with the goal of

collecting data and potentially expanding the model. She also noted the need to map the broader reentry landscape, including reentry navigators, transition specialists, apprenticeship navigators, and other partners, to reduce overlap and clarify roles.

Jack Weber emphasized the importance of business and industry engagement, including apprenticeship connections, professional advisory committees, job fairs, and employer pipelines. He noted that these relationships require consistent coordination or they can weaken over time. Director Cox agreed and explained that the specialists will focus particularly on helping higher education graduates find employment aligned with their bachelor's-level training and wage potential.

Participants discussed the need to identify employers willing to hire returning citizens with bachelor's degrees, while also recognizing that employment success should be measured by wage quality and stability, not only whether a person works directly in the field of study. Deputy Secretary Perkins-Cohen and MD Labor Deputy Assistant Secretary of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, John Feaster, emphasized the importance of bringing MD Labor's local workforce and business services teams into the conversation to help connect returning citizens with employers across the state.

Wiring and Internet Access

Director Cox provided updates on technology infrastructure improvements across correctional education sites. She reported that wiring upgrades are complete or underway at facilities with postsecondary programs, using postsecondary funds to support broader school technology needs. The upgrades include replacing outdated wiring, preparing facilities for fiber connections, improving access to a separate education network, supporting Smartboard connectivity, and expanding teacher access to computers. She also noted ongoing efforts to identify funding and technical support for facilities without postsecondary programs, including potential support from Unlock Lab.

Director Cox explained that fiber and wiring upgrades are intended to improve bandwidth, support a separate education network, and reduce reliance on outdated infrastructure. She noted that upgrades will benefit both postsecondary and MD Labor programs by improving internet access in classrooms, supporting Smartboards, and adding teacher workstations where access is currently limited. She also identified GED and occupational testing labs as future priorities because bandwidth limitations have affected testing.

Director Cox also reported that the GED testing center at MTC is nearly complete.. The center will include six testing computers and will be available for both MD Labor and Baltimore City Community College students.

Correctional Education (CE) Data and Program Overview

Acting Director Johnson reviewed Correctional Education's continuous improvement model, explaining that CE is using a collaborative, data-driven Plan-Do-Study-Act approach to identify challenges, test improvements, collect data, pilot strategies, and scale successful practices. She described the work as focused on adaptive educational challenges rather than quick technical fixes.

She noted that teachers are being trained to use assessment data to guide instruction, pacing, and student progress toward transition and occupational certificates.

Acting Director Johnson also described program access and reentry supports, including entrance orientations, encouragement of complementary academic and occupational programming, transition planning, and one year of post-release support through reentry navigators. She highlighted the goal of helping students secure employment, apprenticeships, or family-sustaining wages after release.

The discussion also addressed the effect of institutional shutdowns on program delivery. Acting Director Johnson reported that staffing-related shutdowns continue to limit in-person instruction, particularly at MCTC and RCI, which represent a significant portion of the student population. She noted that CE has used adjusted schedules, tablets, synchronous instruction, asynchronous work, and proxy assignments to maintain instruction, but emphasized that these alternatives do not fully replace in-person teaching.

Deputy Secretary Perkins-Cohen identified shutdowns as a central issue affecting outcomes and encouraged focused attention on possible solutions. Director Cox suggested further review with DPSCS leadership regarding staffing levels, hiring pipelines, regional challenges, and practices used in other states.

The individual program updates highlighted continued efforts to strengthen correctional libraries, academic instruction, special education, career and technical education, and transition services. Correctional libraries were described as core education and reentry infrastructure, with updates on the MCIW family literacy pilot, the Destiny library information system, and expanded young adult collections focused on literacy, workforce readiness, life skills, and reentry. DPSCS Assistant Secretary of Programs and Re-Entry Services, Ellen Rappaport, requested looking into how many parents would be eligible for the family literacy program once it is out of the pilot stage.

Academic updates focused on individualized learning plans, use of assessment data and SMART goals, classroom observations, instructional rounds, tablet-based instruction, Smartboards, and GED testing progress despite shutdowns. Special education updates included development of a limited certificate pathway for eligible students, pilots of financial literacy and reentry tools, and a dashboard to track IEP compliance. Career and technical education updates included planning for the 2026 Professional Advisory Committee meeting and progress toward occupational graduate and credential goals. Transition updates focused on entrance and reentry orientations, transition planning, post-release navigator support, independent study participation, and alignment among transition, navigator, and apprenticeship teams.

Concluding Remarks

The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.