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Contact: [Sarah Manekin](#), Abell Foundation
410-547-1300

Better Prison Education Programs Improve Public Safety

New report surveys prison education programs in Maryland, including barriers and opportunities to improving outcomes for individuals and communities

BALTIMORE - In Maryland, more than 40 percent of incarcerated individuals re-offend and end up back in prison at great cost to the state and public safety. One reason for this high rate of recidivism is that many of the individuals released from Maryland prisons are unprepared to transition back to their communities. Frequently, they lack skills necessary to find employment and are left with few options.

Research shows that higher levels of education attainment are consistently associated with higher rates of employment, lower rates of recidivism and improved public safety. Maryland, however, struggles to design and fund successful prison education programs.

In a new report from the Abell Foundation, [Prison Education: Maximizing the Potential for Employment and Successful Community Reintegration](#), authors Peter Leone and Pamela Wruble examine the current landscape of correctional education in Maryland, current barriers to opportunity and best practices from across the country.

Leone and Wruble cite research showing that inmates who participated in a correctional education program had 43 percent better odds that they would not re-offend. If Maryland could lower its recidivism rate, they add, the state could save public money and improve public safety. Maryland's Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services spent more than \$1 billion for prison operations in FY2016. Prison education programs have the potential to return between \$12 and \$75 in benefits to the state for each dollar spent.

When formerly incarcerated individuals obtain jobs and remain crime free, "we all benefit from safer communities, increased tax revenues and decreased costs associated with crime and imprisonment," Leone and Wruble argue. "The time is ripe for a renaissance in correctional education in our state, and high-quality, widely available correctional education is a proven and broadly supported resource to accomplish important criminal justice reform objectives."

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The Abell Foundation is dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life in Maryland, with a particular focus on Baltimore City. The Foundation places a strong emphasis on opening the doors of opportunity to the disenfranchised, believing that no community can thrive if those who live on the margins of it are not included.

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