

SB 234 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 5/11, 5/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Higher Education Coordinating Commission to convene a group of specified stakeholders to conduct a study and develop recommendations for serving adults in custody who are eligible to receive federal student grants. Requires stakeholder group to provide results and recommendations to interim legislative committees by December 31, 2021. Sunsets June 30, 2022. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

Senate vote: Passed. Ayes, 22; Nays, 6--Boquist, Girod, Linthicum, Robinson, Thatcher, Thomsen; Excused, 2--Frederick, Heard.

FISCAL: Fiscal impact issued

REVENUE: No revenue impact

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Importance of education for reintegration for post-release individuals
- Recidivism rates for individuals with access to education
- Ability for incarcerated individuals to transfer academic credit
- Pilot program currently in operation at institutions in Oregon
- Experiences of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Pell Grant financial aid program was created as part of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This program offers grants to help low-income individuals meet the cost of pursuing higher education. In 1994, Congress prohibited incarcerated individuals from accessing Pell Grants as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education developed a pilot program that offered Pell Grants to individuals at state or federal prisons in partnership with a limited number of higher education institutions, an initiative that became known as Second Chance Pell Grants. The original program was limited to 63 institutions, but was expanded to 130 schools in 2020. In December of 2020, Congress lifted the ban on access to Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals as part of an omnibus spending package.

Senate Bill 234 A requires the Department of Corrections to convene a group of specified stakeholders to conduct a study and develop recommendations for serving adults in custody who are newly eligible to receive Second Chance Pell Grants.