

EDUCATION (EDU)

Resolution EDU-22-11

ESTABLISHMENT OF HIGHER-ED PRISON TASK FORCE

WHEREAS, The National Black Caucus of State Legislators has long held that the benefits of higher education programming (HEP) to committed persons and to society are well-documented;

WHEREAS, there is clear and documented interest among persons committed in the respective state departments of corrections to participate in higher education opportunities during their incarceration;

WHEREAS, there is clear and documented interest among public and private not-for-profit colleges and universities to offer a range of higher education programming (e.g., credit-bearing, non-credit bearing, upper-division, lower-division, graduate studies) focused on different content areas (e.g., arts, liberal arts, technology, humanities, business, public policy, and social services) in the state prisons;

WHEREAS, Public and private not-for-profit universities and colleges have primary expertise in running higher education at conventional campuses, in-person, and via correspondence;

WHEREAS, Public and private not-for-profit universities and colleges have established Higher Education in Prison (HEP) programs and are guided by best practices; and

WHEREAS, A diversity of higher education programs run by public and private not-for-profit institutions will best respond to the needs and interests of the diverse population of persons committed in prisons;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) recognizes the importance of providing opportunity for all incarcerated, and urges our states to create Higher Education in Prison Task Force whose purpose is the following:

- (1) To obtain and analyze existing data on HEP;
- (2) To identify data points to allow for meaningful, statewide evaluation of HEP;
- (3) To assess barriers and opportunities to HEP, including barriers and opportunities to continuing higher education upon release; and
- (4) To recommend a legislative action plan to expand access to HEP;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that department of corrections are urged to train its correctional officers and other personnel on the values of HEP;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that universities and colleges will be in charge of admissions, program design, academic content, and implementation of their respective programs;

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the state departments of corrections are urged to enact and implement internal policies that support HEP programs' efficient operation and their growth and that support incarcerated students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that state department of corrections are urged to encourage all eligible committed persons to apply for higher education programming, without restriction as to offense, sentence length, or remaining time to be served; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Representative Carol Ammons (IL)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Education (EDU) Policy Committee

Ratified in Plenary Session: December 2, 2021

Ratification certified by: Representative Billy Mitchell (GA), NBCSL President