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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 115

Offered January 8, 2020

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Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the adequacy of prisoner educational and vocational training programs. Report.

Patron—Aird

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Vera Institute of Justice reported that 95 percent of prisoners are eventually released back into the community; and

WHEREAS, educational and vocational training programs for prisoners are used to provide them with knowledge and skills that will help them to become productive members of society upon reentry, secure employment, provide for their families, and serve their communities; and

WHEREAS, participation in educational and vocational training programs also lowers the likelihood that a prisoner will reengage in criminal activity upon reentry and return to the corrections system; and

WHEREAS, the Vera Institute of Justice reported that only one-third of prisoners receive vocational training during incarceration and that a mere six percent receive access to higher education; and

WHEREAS, it is in the Commonwealth's best social and financial interests to ensure that prisoners are given adequate educational opportunities and vocational training during incarceration to encourage their successful reentry and lower the odds of their returning to the Commonwealth's corrections system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the adequacy of prisoner educational and vocational training programs.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall (i) identify all educational and vocational training programs provided to prisoners in the Commonwealth; (ii) calculate the percentage of prisoners who participate in such educational and vocational training programs; (iii) identify and analyze any correlation between participation in such programs and successful reentry into the community, including correlations related to employment and recidivism; (iv) identify trades and industries within the Commonwealth with the greatest current need for employees and determine if educational and vocational training programs exist to prepare prisoners for such trades or industries; and (v) make recommendations to improve current educational and vocational training programs, create additional programs that provide training and education as necessary for employment in the trades and industries with the greatest current need for employees, and increase the number of prisoners participating in such programs.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2020, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2021 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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