REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Public Act 121 of 2024
Article 2, Section 404
Workforce Development Program Results

Sec. 404. (1) From the funds appropriated in part 1, the department shall design services for offender success and vocational education programs, collaborating with the department of labor and economic opportunity and local entities to the extent deemed necessary by the director. The department shall ensure the program provides relevant professional development opportunities to prisoners that are high quality, demand driven, locally receptive, and responsive to the needs of the communities where the prisoners are expected to reside after their release from correctional facilities.

Sec. 404 (2) Not later than March 1, the department shall provide a report detailing the results of the workforce development program.

In an effort to ensure public safety, reduce recidivism, and connect returning citizens with employment opportunities, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) has continued to improve its workforce development programs and professional development opportunities (vocational programs) that are offered to prisoners. To accomplish these goals, the department has placed an emphasis on creating employer partnerships, breaking down barriers to employment, hosting hiring events, and preparing our job seekers for employers' expectations through workforce development and vocational programming.

Many factors are considered when choosing which vocational programs to add within MDOC facilities. Labor market trends are reviewed to see how many jobs are available and projected to be available within the State. Employer demand and support is considered to determine if there are employers willing to hire returning citizens in their industry at a high rate. Our student population is assessed to see their interest and intent within any program before consideration. Also, we only consider programs if they are backed by industry or state recognized credentials, so students' parole with documentation that has prepared them to step into any industry and preform at a high level.

The Employment and Opportunities Unit (EOU) has direct relationships with employers throughout Michigan. The Department uses their employer connections to place returning citizens, and probationers into open employment and training opportunities. The Department also uses these connections to ensure vocational training opportunities offered within correctional facilities are being provided in in-demand industries and meet the standards necessary for employment post-release.

To increase the likelihood of employment for returning citizens, and to protect employers, the MDOC has partnered with the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity to bond eligible returning citizens through the Fidelity Bonding program. The Fidelity Bonding program provides employer's bonding coverage between $5,000 and $25,000 each, to protect against theft, larceny, forgery, and embezzlement for the first 6 months of employment, free of charge. From October 1st, 2023, to September 30th, 2024, EOU has assisted employer's bond 15 candidates for employment.

During 2024, the EOU facilitated three large job fairs throughout the Lower Peninsula. Those events took place in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties. The EOU partnered with the relevant parole and probation offices, Offender Success Administrative Agencies, community employment agencies, and local employers to plan smaller events and discuss what employment positions were needed in each county. Returning

citizens were given opportunities to practice with mock interviews and build quality resumés prior to attending the job fairs.

In total, several hundred job seekers and 120 employers/vendors attended these job fairs, with dozens of job seekers pursuing employment via in-person or on-site interviews as a result of the hiring.