

### **Inmate Education and Vocational Training Programs**

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2024

WHEREAS, the Code of Virginia directs the operation of educational and vocational programs in all correctional institutions; and

WHEREAS, the average daily population in the state prison system has been about 23,000 in recent years, and many state responsible inmates are housed in regional or local jails; and

WHEREAS, inmates after they are released have unemployment rates at least four times higher than the general population; and

WHEREAS, research suggests that participation in education and vocational training programs and successful employment post-release lower the likelihood of reoffending; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Corrections strategic plan emphasizes the importance of opportunities to participate in educational and vocational programs and the promotion of post-release employment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the availability and effectiveness of inmate education and vocational training programs, including those that focus on providing life skills necessary for success. In conducting its review, staff shall: (i) inventory the programs at each correctional institution and identify how they are funded and staffed; (ii) evaluate whether the programs are sufficiently available and appropriately designed to meet the needs of inmates and the Virginia labor market; (iii) evaluate participant outcomes, to include employment, academic or industry credentials, or further education; (iv) compare Virginia's programs to evidence-based and best practices; and (v) evaluate the feasibility and potential effectiveness of providing educational and vocational services in local and regional jails.

JLARC shall make recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Virginia Department of Corrections, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Community College System, Virginia Compensation Board, Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission, Virginia State Police, the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement, and local sheriffs' departments, shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to its statutory authority.