

SENATE THIRD READING  
SB 75 (Smallwood-Cuevas)  
As Amended June 17, 2025  
Majority vote

## SUMMARY

Requires, no later than January 1, 2028, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), in partnership with the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) and recognized building and construction trades councils, to establish the Preapprenticeship Pathways to Employment Pilot Program (program) to provide incarcerated individuals nearing release with access to high-quality preapprenticeship training aligned with state-registered apprenticeships in the building and construction trades.

### Major Provisions

- 1) Requires, no later than January 1, 2028, the CDCR, in partnership with the DIR and recognized building and construction trades councils, to establish the program.
- 2) States that the purpose of the program is to provide incarcerated individuals with access to high-quality preapprenticeship training aligned with state-registered apprenticeships in the skilled construction and building trades.
- 3) Requires the CDCR to ensure equitable access to the program across each facility under its jurisdiction, including facilities housing women and gender-responsive institutions. The CDCR shall implement the program in at least one men's and one women's facility.
- 4) Requires the program to include all of the following:
  - a) Instruction based on the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3), recognized by the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California. The instruction shall prepare participants for entry into a wide range of union-affiliated skilled trades, including, but not limited to, each of the following:
    - i) Carpentry.
    - ii) Ironwork.
    - iii) Sheet metal.
    - iv) Laborers.
    - v) Operating engineers.
  - b) Availability to incarcerated individuals who are within 24 months of release and express interest in careers in the trades.
  - c) Career readiness and case management services that are designed to facilitate direct transition into union apprenticeships following release. These services may be provided by existing workforce and community-based programs and shall include, but are not limited to, each of the following:

- i) Employment and training services, including job readiness workshops, occupational skills training, preapprenticeship placement, and paid transitional work opportunities.
  - ii) Behavioral health and substance use services, including mental health counseling, cognitive behavioral therapy, substance use disorder treatment, and peer recovery support.
  - iii) Housing support services, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, housing navigation, and rapid rehousing assistance.
  - iv) Transportation assistance, including public transit passes, rideshare vouchers, and driver's license reinstatement support.
  - v) Family and childcare support, including parenting classes, childcare subsidies, and family reunification services.
  - vi) Legal services, including expungement and record sealing clinics, support with fines and fees, and reentry-related legal navigation.
  - vii) Digital and financial literacy services, including digital skills training, budgeting support, credit repair, and access to communication tools.
  - viii) Basic needs support, including access to work clothing, hygiene items, food assistance, and mobile phone access.
- d) Classroom and hands-on instruction in construction safety, trade mathematics, blueprint reading, industry orientation, and other foundational skills aligned with state-registered apprenticeship standards. Content shall be taught by certified instructors and coordinated with local joint apprenticeship training committees.
  - e) Facilities who implement the program shall not grant preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin, in accordance with Section 31 of Article I of the California Constitution. Access shall be based on facility needs, proximity to release, and participant interest in skilled trades careers.
  - f) Participants who complete the program shall receive an MC3 certification from a certified training provider.
- 5) Requires CDCR to submit a report to the Legislature, beginning January 1, 2029, and each year thereafter, that includes the following information:
- a) The number of individuals who have enrolled in the program.
  - b) The number of individuals who have completed the program.
  - c) The number of individuals placed in registered apprenticeships or related employment.
  - d) The number of individuals from each participating facility and program site in categories a)-c) above.
  - e) Identified barriers to access and participation.

- 6) Provides that this chapter shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2032, and as of that date is repealed.

## COMMENTS

As a population, the formerly incarcerated face a number of barriers upon release, including finding employment. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, formerly incarcerated persons are unemployed at a rate of more than 27%—"higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period, including the Great Depression."<sup>1</sup> This is despite research demonstrating that formerly incarcerated people overwhelmingly want to work. According to the Brookings Institution, when this population does find work, the majority that are recently released receive an income that puts them well below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup>

Unemployment among the formerly incarcerated is the highest within the first two years of release, making prerelease and post-release employment services critical. In addition, studies have shown that this population needs supportive services in addition to "direct services"<sup>3</sup> for successful labor market outcomes. One key state-based initiative that provides both direct and supportive services to formerly justice-involved individuals—California's Prison to Employment Initiative, funded by the Legislature in 2018, and administered by the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB), has achieved promising results. In its 2021 Interim Report evaluating the initiative, the CWDB reported that nearly 400 program participants "have earned an industry-recognized credential, granting them access to a range of careers that require such certifications as a prerequisite for employment."<sup>4</sup> Policy research confirms that vocational training is critical to reemployment. In fact, vocational training provided *while incarcerated* increases post-release employment by 28%.<sup>5</sup>

### According to the Author

According to the author, "There is an urgent need to create meaningful preapprenticeship and reentry pathways for incarcerated individuals who are ready to rebuild their lives, because too many people, especially women and people of color, are released without the skills, credentials, and support they need to succeed. SB 75 ensures that incarcerated individuals can access high-quality MC3-certified training and wraparound services so they can transition directly into union-affiliated skilled trades careers, achieve economic stability, and avoid the cycles of poverty and recidivism that harm families and communities."

### Arguments in Support

The California Public Defenders Association is in support and states, "Numerous studies have found that employment and housing are crucial to successful reintegration into the community for

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<sup>1</sup> Couloute, Lucius and Kopf, Daniel. "Out of Prison and Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people." The Prison Policy Initiative, July 2018.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "Direct services" provide participants with career and skills training assistance.

<sup>4</sup> The California Workforce Development Board, "Prison to Employment Initiative: Interim Report for Evaluation of Workforce Development Programs submitted pursuant to Supplemental Report of the 2018-19 Budget Act." p. 7. 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, Lois M., Steele, Jennifer L., and Bozick, Robert, et al., "How Effective is Correctional Education and Where Do We Go From Here? The Results of a Comprehensive Evaluation." The RAND Corporation, 2014.

formerly incarcerated individuals. Careers in the skill trades, especially coupled with union membership, provide a good living wage to support a family.

As public defenders, we know that for our formerly incarcerated clients appropriate training and support are essential to reducing recidivism and fostering economic self-sufficiency.

At a time when so many communities are facing a skilled labor shortage as they struggle either to rebuild after natural disasters or build new affordable housing, SB 75 would potentially provide a smart cost-effective solution to many problems."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None on file.

## **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee,

- 1) Annual costs in the low millions of dollars to CDCR to establish and operate the Program, including hiring certified instructors and coordinating with local joint apprenticeship training committees to provide classroom and hands-on instruction across various subject matters (General Fund (GF)). CDCR estimates implementation costs to exceed \$1.5 million per institution, with additional per-institution costs in the millions of dollars to provide career readiness and case management services absent interest from community groups to provide such services.

Additionally, CDCR notes that several provisions of this bill are unclear, which may further increase costs. For example, the requirement to ensure equitable access to the Program across each CDCR facility may require CDCR to implement the Program at all facilities, not just one men's and one women's facility, and references to post-release case management services and data reporting may require CDCR to contact and track individuals no longer within CDCR's jurisdiction.

Costs of approximately \$209,000 in the first year and \$197,000 annually thereafter to DIR's Division of Apprenticeship Standards to partner with CDCR to implement the Program (GF).

## **VOTES**

### **SENATE FLOOR: 38-0-2**

**YES:** Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Hurtado, Reyes

### **ASM LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT: 7-0-0**

**YES:** Ortega, Flora, Chen, Elhawary, Kalra, Lee, Ward

### **ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 9-0-0**

**YES:** Schultz, Alanis, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Lackey, Nguyen, Ramos, Sharp-Collins

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0**

**YES:** Wicks, Sanchez, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Ahrens, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

**UPDATED**

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CONSULTANT: Megan Lane / L. & E. / (916) 319-2091

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