

Senate Resolution 770

By: Senators Harrell of the 40th, Jackson of the 41st, Orrock of the 36th, Hickman of the 4th and Hodges of the 3rd

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Senate Higher Education in Prison Study Committee; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, higher education is a strong determinant of employment outcomes, social
3 mobility, and future income because it equips individuals with the knowledge and skills
4 needed to contribute effectively to society; and

5 WHEREAS, the 2023 overhaul of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid program
6 allotted federal Pell Grants to people in prisons and increased total spending by \$617 million,
7 giving the nation the greatest opportunity to expand higher education in prison since such
8 grants were cut in 1994; and

9 WHEREAS, there are currently more than 47,000 Georgians in our state prisons, which cost
10 taxpayers \$1.32 billion in 2024; and

11 WHEREAS, the rate of recidivism in Georgia is at least 30 percent, and postsecondary
12 education has been found to be the most effective educational program at reducing
13 recidivism with multiple studies finding that education in prison reduces its rate by 43
14 percent; and

15 WHEREAS, providing postsecondary education to people in prisons will add specialized
16 laborers to Georgia's economy, bolstering our workforce to remain the number one state to
17 do business; and

18 WHEREAS, providing postsecondary education in prison will allow people in prisons to use
19 their time more productively, boost self-motivation and mental health, and develop real
20 career skills to apply after release; and

21 WHEREAS, entire communities benefit when people released from prison return as more
22 productive and educated individuals ready to contribute to their community; and

23 WHEREAS, previous studies have found that states ultimately offset all costs of
24 implementing postsecondary education in prisons with future savings from reduced rates of
25 recidivism; and

26 WHEREAS, other southern states have taken action in the form of expanding the number of
27 colleges, universities, and technical schools offering small business training; and

28 WHEREAS, the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison and its associated
29 organizations have started groundbreaking programs in Georgia's prisons, but their ability
30 to expand educational opportunities and provide transition services is limited; and

31 WHEREAS, the aforesaid coalition and other organizations have identified five categories
32 of challenges and obstacles for people in prisons continuing their postsecondary education
33 after release, including issues related to scholarship eligibility, housing obtainment,
34 behavioral health services, medical care, and access to employment; and

35 WHEREAS, a study is needed to further investigate the social and economic impacts of
36 increasing postsecondary opportunities in Georgia's prisons and to thoroughly determine
37 what measures may be necessary and appropriate to increase postsecondary education.

38 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE:

39 (1) **Creation of Senate study committee.** There is created the Senate Higher Education
40 in Prison Study Committee.

41 (2) **Members and officers.**

42 (A) The committee shall be composed of six members of the Senate to be appointed
43 by the President of the Senate, of whom two shall serve as cochairpersons, one from the
44 majority party and one from the minority party, as designated by the President of the
45 Senate.

46 (B) The President shall appoint the additional four members of the committee as
47 follows:

48 (i) The Commissioner of the Department of Corrections or his or her designee:

49 (ii) The Commissioner of the Department of Community Supervision or his or her
50 designee;

51 (iii) The Chancellor of the Board of Regents or his or her designee; and

52 (iv) The Commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia or his or her
53 designee.

54 (3) **Powers and duties.**

55 (A) The committee shall undertake a study of the conditions, needs, issues, and
56 problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any action or legislation
57 which the committee deems necessary or appropriate.

58 (B) The duties of the committee shall also include, but not be limited to:

59 (i) Examining the state's current postsecondary and transition offerings; and

60 (ii) Studying the most recent data on postsecondary offerings in prisons and
61 successful models around the country.

62 (4) **Meetings.** The cochairpersons shall call all meetings of the committee. The
63 committee may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem
64 necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform
65 its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution.

66 (5) **Allowances, expenses, and funding.**

67 (A) The legislative members of the committee shall receive the allowances provided
68 for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

69 (B) Members of the committee who are state officials, other than legislative members,
70 or who are state employees shall receive no compensation for their services on the
71 committee, but they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the
72 performance of their duties as members of the committee in the same manner as they
73 are reimbursed for expenses in their capacities as state officials or employees.

74 (C) Members of the committee who are not legislators, state officials, or state
75 employees shall receive a daily expense allowance in an amount the same as that
76 specified in subsection (b) of Code Section 45-7-21 of the Official Code of Georgia
77 Annotated, as well as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state
78 employees.

79 (D) The allowances authorized by this resolution shall not be received by any member
80 of the committee for more than five days unless additional days are authorized. Funds
81 necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from funds
82 appropriated to the Senate; except that funds for the reimbursement of the expenses of
83 state officials, other than legislative members, and for the reimbursement of the
84 expenses of state employees shall come from funds appropriated to or otherwise
85 available to their respective agencies.

86 (6) **Report.**

87 (A) In the event the committee adopts any specific findings or recommendations that
88 include suggestions for proposed legislation, the cochairpersons shall file a report of the
89 same prior to the date of abolishment specified in this resolution, subject to
90 subparagraph (C) of this paragraph.

91 (B) In the event the committee adopts a report that does not include suggestions for
92 proposed legislation, the cochairpersons shall file the report, subject to
93 subparagraph (C) of this paragraph.

94 (C) No report shall be filed unless the same has been approved prior to the date of
95 abolishment specified in this resolution by majority vote of a quorum of the committee.
96 A report so approved shall be signed by the cochairpersons of the committee and filed
97 with the Secretary of the Senate.

98 (D) In the absence of an approved report, the cochairpersons may file with the
99 Secretary of the Senate a copy of the minutes of the meetings of the committee in lieu
100 thereof.

101 (7) **Abolishment.** The committee shall stand abolished on December 1, 2024.