

- Welcome everyone to today's webinar on Pell Reinstatement 2023, Preparing for Implementation. My name is Belinda Wheeler and I'm a senior program associate at the Vera Institute of Justice. This is an exciting time in correctional education as we prepare to reinstate Pell Grant access for the first time in 26 years to people who are incarcerated. Before we begin our discussion today, here is a little more general information about today's webinar. Just a reminder, this meeting is being recorded. It is hosted by the National Reentry Resource Center. Any participant who prefers to participate via audio rather than being on camera, should disable their video camera accordingly so only their audio is captured and video and or audio recordings of the AIR session shall not be transmitted to an external third party without permission of AIR. So now I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Andre Bethea, senior Policy Advisor, Corrections, Reentry, and Justice Reform at BJA, Andre.

- Thanks, Belinda, hello, everyone. My name is Andre Bethea and I'm Senior Policy Advisor here at the Bureau of Justice Assistance, which is within the Office of Justice Programs at the US Department of Justice. The Office of Justice Programs or OJP provides grant funding, training, research and statistics to the criminal justice community. OJP is one of three grant making components of the Department of Justice, along with the Office on Violence Against Women and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Within the Office of Justice Programs, you have the Bureau of Justice Assistance where I sit, also the Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Office for Victims of Crimes, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, as well as the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. Next, the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance or BJA works with communities, governments, and nonprofit organizations to reduce crime, to reduce and unnecessary confinement and promote a fair criminal justice system. Our director currently is Karlton F. Moore, next. So we have five major strategic focus areas here at BJA. First is to improve public safety through measures which build trust with the community and ensure an effective criminal justice system. Second, reduction in recidivism and prevention of unnecessary confinement and interactions with the criminal justice system. Our third major strategic focus area is integration of evidence-based research-driven strategies into the day operations of BJA and the programs BJA administers and supports. The fourth major strategic focus area, increasing program effectiveness with a renewed emphasis on data analysis, information sharing, and performance management. Lastly, ensuring organizational excellence through outstanding administration and oversight of all of BJA's strategic investments, next. So here at the Bureau Justice Assistance we fund, which is we invest diverse funding streams to accomplish the goals. We educate the research, development and delivery of what works. We equip, meaning we just create tools and products to build capacity and improve outcomes. As well as at BJA, we partner, we consult, connect, and convene.

- [Belinda] Great, thank you very much for that, Andre.

- Thank you, Belinda.

- Excellent. So just as a reminder for everyone, if you would like to track news and updates on social media, please use the following hashtags, #ReentryMatters, #SecondChanceMonth and #SecondChanceMonth23. So just to provide you a little bit of information about Vera Institute of Justice, our mission is to end the overcriminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants and people experiencing poverty. Vera harnesses the power of evidence to pilot real world programs and drive effective policies and practices in the criminal legal system in collaboration with government partners and community advocates. Vera provides technical assistance to Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance grantees, as you can see here on this slide, that are implementing education, employment, and reentry programs. Vera is also the designated technical assistance provider under the US Department of Education's Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative. So, for our agenda today, I'm going to provide momentarily some introductions of our wonderful speakers. We're going to have opening remarks from Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Amy Solomon, we're going to have a discussion on Pell Reinstatement. Then we'll have a couple of slides on additional resources, and then we'll move to Q and A. So the speakers that we have here today, again aforementioned, Amy Solomon from the US Department of Justice, Mr. Sean Addie, Director of Correctional Education, US Department of Education, Mr. Patrick Rodriguez, Co-Executive Director, Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison, and Mr. Jay Sanders, Assistant Commissioner, Georgia Department of Corrections. So now I would like to pass it over to Ms. Amy Solomon, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the US Department of Justice to bring greetings. Thank you, Amy.

- Thank you, thank you so much, Belinda, and good afternoon everyone. I am so pleased to welcome all of you to this webinar. I wanna thank Belinda and the fantastic team at Vera for facilitating today's event. And thanks as well to my fellow speakers, Sean Addie, Patrick Rodriguez, and Commissioner Sanders. A big shout out to the National Reentry Resource Center for the wonderful work they do. And of course, thank you to Karhlton Moore, Andre Bethea, and the amazing team in our Bureau of Justice Assistance for serving as our hosts and for their incredible leadership. Now, I wanna take just a moment before we dive into the presentations to tell you just how excited we are at the Office of Justice Programs for the full reinstatement of Pell eligibility for incarcerated students. And let me express my deepest gratitude for the vital role that so many of you have played in bringing us to this moment. Many of you are there on the ground floor of this movement and have been advocating for greater access to educational opportunities since the Pell Ban was instituted in 1994. I was fortunate to be part of the launch of the Second Chance Pell Initiative back in 2015, working with the Departments of Education and Justice in my role as the Executive Director of President Obama's Federal Inter-agency Reentry Council. And in that first year, we were able to designate 67 colleges in 28 states at the inaugural Second Chance Pell site. We have continued to build on that momentum. Last year, we rolled out the third wave of Second Chance Pell sites, bringing the program to now more than 200 colleges in 48 states, DC and Puerto Rico. And in the meantime, bipartisan commitment on Capitol Hill restored Pell access to all incarcerated students. And here we are on the cusp of full scale Pell implementation beginning in July. Full Pell restoration was the dream, it was the hope, was the plan, but it was by no means a guaranteed. And so here we are. It is important to recognize that this has been in every sense, a collective achievement. The impetus for Pell Reinstatement came from incarcerated and formally incarcerated students. And so many people, corrections officials, education professionals, reentry advocates, community organizers, and national leaders like our partners at Vera, all came together to see it through. Together, we made the case that post-secondary education improves the likelihood of reentry success and research bears this out. People who participate in correctional education have significantly lower odds of recidivism than those who don't. And it pays for itself four times over. But just as important, it unlocks potential and helps open the doors to individual growth and development. We know that it has a multi-generational benefit. Kids are more likely to go to college or trade school when their parents do, which means that a post-secondary education can actually create a legacy of academic participation that carries over to one's kids and grandchildren. Put simply, education is foundational to success and access to Pell Grants will put that opportunity within reach for thousands, for hundreds of thousands of incarcerated individuals. I am so proud of the role that the Office of Justice has played in this effort, and BJA has been working steadily over the years with our colleagues at the Department of Education and at Vera to provide high quality technical assistance to colleges and corrections departments that participate in Second Chance Pell. Just this week on Monday, we were able to celebrate one of those programs in a beautiful event put together by Angel Sanchez, a Second Chance Fellow here at BJA. Angel earned his GED while he was incarcerated in the Florida Department of Corrections, and he went on to obtain his college and law degrees after release, graduating top of his class. So there we were at the Everglades facility in the Florida Department of Corrections with dozens of incarcerated students, the Assistant Secretary of Education, Amy Lloyd, the President of North Campus for Miami-Dade College, BJA Director Karhlton Moore, senior officials in the Florida Department of Corrections, Patrick Rodriguez and Sean Addie, who are here on this webinar, Desmond Need and so many formerly incarcerated people who are now leaders in their communities and champions for this cause. The event was truly inspiring, recognizing the amazing strides that are being made in Miami and around the country and with great hope for this significant expansion at Pell as implementation goes live this summer. Before I close, I wanna mention that we're also supporting a broad range of reentry efforts, focusing not only on education, but on employment, housing, behavioral health, and other issues. We've now awarded more than a thousand reentry grants under the Second Chance Act, including the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison, which you'll hear about in just a moment from Patrick. Our one new program that I'm really excited about is BJA's Second Chance Community-Based Reentry Incubator Initiative. I know it is a mouthful, but this is essentially a micro-grant program. This is a new effort that will help break down barriers to federal resources by funding intermediary organizations that will then deliver sub-awards to smaller community-based reentry providers. The intermediaries will also provide hands-on technical assistance to help the smaller CBOs grow their capacity to deliver support for people returning home. We are so excited about this new dimension of Second Chance funding as we work to strengthen the community-based ecosystem of reentry services and support. So this solicitation is now live, as are many others, and we hope that you'll take a good look and we're eagerly awaiting proposals. There is a lot to celebrate and much hard work ahead, but I can assure you that OJP is fully committed to making this the most out of this once in a generation opportunity. So thank you all for everything you're doing to invest in

the potential of incarcerated students, and thank you so much for joining us today.

- Thank you so much for that generous welcome, PDAAG Solomon. So Pell Reinstatement builds on the success of the US Department of Education Second Chance Pell program through which 200 colleges, as was just mentioned a few moments ago, are teaching in corrections departments across 48 states, DC and Puerto Rico. From 2016 to 2022, over 28,000 students have earned approximately 9,000 post-secondary credentials. This includes certificates, diplomas, associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees. So now I'd like to turn the conversation over to Mr. Sean Addie, who's on the call with us today. Sean, my question to you, my friend, is can you please share an overview of the benefits your agency has seen from educational programming in prison and provide updates from the department about Pell expansion, Sean?

- Sure, I'm glad to, Belinda, and thank you again for the invitation to participate in this webinar. And good afternoon or it's good morning if you're on the West Coast or further west. You know, I feel like a little bit here repeating what Amy was talking about, but in terms of the benefits we've seen, but you know, kind of the number one benefit we've seen is educational attainment. Many people who are incarcerated don't have an opportunity to do anything beyond achieve their high school equivalency or their high school diploma. And one thing that we've seen with Second Chance Pell and forthcoming Pell Reinstatement is people being able to go above and beyond that, get their associate's degree or get their bachelor's degree while they're incarcerated. Another thing we've seen is the change in the culture of correctional facilities where people are participating in post-secondary education. I mean, unfortunately, not everyone who's incarcerated is going to be able to leave a correctional facility. And so one thing we've seen with education is that it changes that culture, those people serving life sentences, they can participate in education, act as mentors and leaders in those correctional facilities to help change the culture, to help make it more of an academic environment. And we see a reduction in infractions in those facilities because people are occupied, they're students, they're busy studying, they're busy working, they're busy preparing for class or being in class. We also see multi-generational effects for that education. You know, when someone gets a post-secondary credential, post-secondary degree or certificate, it has an effect not just on them, but also on their family members. They see, you know, my uncle, my aunt or my husband, my wife, my spouse can do this. You know, what's possible for me to do with not-incarcerated? Education has a ripple effect on those it touches and impacts their families as well. We also see, you know, for people who are leaving incarceration, the impacts that education has on employment post-release. You know, we're all where we are today in part or in whole because of the education that we've received. And so it has that same impact for people who are incarcerated. But it also has an effect on families and communities. When people are coming home, you know, with in education, pursuing employment, having changed their lives and their lives' trajectories, we see the same thing to the communities that people are returning to and the families that they're going back to. You know, creating those pathways to education and employment. You know, Amy mentioned that we were in an event on Monday in Florida, Patrick and Amy and I, which seems like it was more than two days ago. And we heard from Angel, the Second Chance Fellow at the department, one of the Second Chance Fellows at the Department of Justice. And he talked about how, you know, all the metrics that we use when we talk about education in prison are positive except for recidivism, which is a negative, you know, and how we shouldn't be focusing on, you know, people failing, but instead looking at people who are succeeding. So, you know, obviously recidivism is something that we look at, but I think, you know, as I mentioned with all the other benefits that we look at, you know, recidivism kind of pales in comparison to some of the other positive things that people are doing with their lives because of education. In terms of what's happening at the department, so right now we are getting ready for July 1st, 2023 when prison education programs will be able to access Pell Grants and, excuse me, access Pell Grants and start delivering post-secondary education through that program. We'll be announcing in the forthcoming weeks kind of updates for Second Chance Pell, as you heard from Amy. You know, Second Chance Pell has been active for a while now. And with the rollout of prison education programs, we'll be announcing an update for Second Chance Pell and what that's going to look like for Second Chance Pell Schools as they look to transition their programs to Prison Education Programs. So stay tuned for forthcoming information from the department in regards to Second Chance Pell and what that looks like. The department is releasing guidance. So we recently released a Dear Colleague letter and we are also putting out a fact sheet geared towards incarcerated students so that we can inform them about prison education programs and just let them know that these opportunities are going to be coming 'cause you know, we realize that, you know, there are information deficits inside of correctional facilities and we wanna be able to share information with incarcerated students or potential incarcerated students. So right now we're really doing a lot around outreach and messaging. We're looking

at office hours, looking at other events to inform the field, to inform the public what's happening and also to serve as a conduit from the field, you know, for the questions that they may have if they're seeking more information, I put a plugin for the email box pep@ed.gov. You know, if you have any questions or anything that doesn't get answered today or anything that bubbles up, send that email address your question and we'll work to answer it. We're also working, as Belinda mentioned, with the Vera Institute on technical assistance to Second Chance Pell Schools, as well as to future potential prison education programs. We were in a webinar, I believe it was last week, perhaps the week before, focusing on juvenile justice facilities and how they could access Pell to help incarcerated or juveniles who are serving a criminal sentence or who are confined. We're also working with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to reach out to their institutions and the incarcerated individuals in those institutions. We really just wanna see high quality prison education programs in as many states and as many correctional facilities as possible. So incarcerated students can obtain those post-secondary degrees, credentials and certificates. We have a knowledge center that we have created. If you search prison education programs, it should turn up. It's a federal student aid knowledge center. And there are resources there that also include questions and answers for frequently asked questions. And just once again, I would say reach out to the department, pep@ed.gov. If you have questions, if you need more information, that's a good one-stop shop. So that's what's been happening. You know, obviously stay tuned. There's more to come, but we're very excited for the forthcoming reinstatement of Pell and we're trying our best to make it as seamless as possible and get as much information out to the field as possible. And also, as I mentioned, being a conduit for information from the field, thank you.

- Great, thank you so much for that, Sean. So I wanted to share just a little bit of information before we actually get into the major discussion with what's happening in Georgia, which is really exciting as you'll see momentarily, but just a little bit about the Prison Education Programs, otherwise known as PEPs moving forward. As we get ready towards Pell Reinstatement, we need to remember the following important facts about these PEPs. So it's gonna be a three-way process with corrections, colleges, well, actually a four-way process, corrections, colleges, accreditors, the college accreditors and the US Department of Education. And in the regulations, when they refer to oversight entity in that documentation, that is referring to corrections. Also who is eligible to be a part of a PEP, that's a very exciting development that we've seen with the negotiated rulemaking process and other things moving forward. Any person who is incarcerated and serving a criminal sentence is eligible to be a part of a PEP, regardless of sentence length or conviction type. That's an exciting new development that I wanted to make sure that we shared with you today. And then also the location of where, while the acronym is PEP, Prison Education Programs, PEPs actually include more than just prisons. As Sean had mentioned a few moments ago, the definition of an additional location for a PEP includes a federal, state, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, juvenile justice facilities, and other correctional facilities. So it's important to kinda keep that in mind. As Sean had mentioned, there's a lot of, you know, more guidance and other material that is moving forward as we are getting ready for July 1st, 2023. But yeah, there's a lot more happening. So this is a great part of this conversation here. So now I wanted to kind of bring it to the examples that we wanted to share with you today, particularly in the state of Georgia. And I'd actually like to invite Mr. Jay Sanders to join me for this next part of the conversation. And Jay, would you mind providing an overview of the system you run as the Assistant Commissioner? Would you mind sharing GDC's, so Georgia Department of Corrections, historical commitment to post-secondary education and your officer's vision regarding post-secondary educational programming in the future, my friend?

- Sure, Belinda, thanks for that opening. First of all, I wanna thank BJA, Vera, the National Reentry Resource Center for hosting this webinar as well as everybody else that supports these opportunities. So we have a large system here in Georgia. You can see by the map there that we're a pretty large state. We've got facilities spread all over the state. We have 34 state prisons with additional facilities, ancillary facilities. It brings our total to over 80 facilities scattered across the state. Right now our population's around 50,000 inmates across those facilities. Every year, prior to COVID, we were releasing about 18,000 inmates a year. We're down a little bit and releasing about 15,000 a year, but our intake's also down, so those numbers are down a little bit. And GDC, like every other correctional agency in the nation, has experienced ebbs and flows with education through the years, just historical ebbs and flows. But in 2011, Governor Diehl came into office and he wanted to focus on education and educational funding within the prison system. So he was able to give us a kickstart there with some funding and a lot of focus and attention on what we were doing in the prison programming arena. And then that's continued under Governor Kemp as well. So we continue utilizing those resources and making best use in them to educate those in our custody. We do try to focus on

education from the time someone hits our system. We start looking at them when they hit the diagnostic process with the end goal in mind of when they're release, be it, you know, next year or perhaps further down the line. But we wanna focus, we wanna give them every opportunity we can while they're with us. We start with the basics. We look to see do they need a GED or potentially can we get them a high school diploma. We actually have a few charter schools in our system, so they have the option of either GED or a high school diploma. And then from there we can focus on vocational or post-secondary programming with them. It depends on what they want to do and in the facility where they're at, like I said, we push education hard. Over the last six or seven years, we've been able to have inmates earn over 10,000 GEDs. And so we continue to push hard to lay that base work. And then, like I said, from there we can move into vocational and post-secondary. We do know, as I think every speaker before has said that those involved in programming are much less likely, A, to cause issues while within the facility, but B, to ultimately ever return to prison. So we want to get them involved, keep them involved. Some of our vision for the programming is that every inmate who is willing can pursue a vocational or a post-secondary program, one of my goals, kind of a wishlist, is that we can deliver a lot of that programming further downstream in the dorm via some technology options that we have and are looking at. But, and someone stated it earlier, bottom line is we wanna create generational change. If we can break the cycle, keep these inmates from coming back to us, then we've helped ourselves, we've helped them and their families by not seeing repeat offenders coming back to us. So that's the ultimate goal. Everybody can pursue an education while with us if they're interested, and then also, like I said, ultimately creating that generational change.

- Awesome, thank you so much for that update with how things are moving forward thus far, Jay. I wanted to kind of turn it, as Jay had kind of mentioned, you know, there's multiple entities in this space, as currently has been happening with educational programming, but also as we're moving towards Pell Reinstatement in July of 2023. And I wanted to focus on this kind of slide that we have here, kind of showing those diverse entities in this space. And we were really intentional about, you know, not having this as a pyramid or a top down or anything like that, that it's equal parts coming together as, you know, as stakeholders in this space to kind of move things forward. So we've had, as I think Sean had mentioned earlier, lots of other webinars about like the PEP process and how that's gonna move forward. So that's not under the purview of today's discussion here, but, you know, knowing that, you know, colleges are working with other entities as part of this multi-stakeholder group to kind of move things forward. And as thus, you know, this is not happening in a vacuum. You know, at Vera, we've been blessed as the technical assistance providers for over a decade now in this space to kind of see how these diverse stakeholders are working together to create and or provide input as they create their respective applications, their review processes and things like that kind of moving forward. And one thing that we really wanted to underscore with this, at most stages we have seen the voices of people who are currently or formally incarcerated provide valuable feedback as we've been moving forward from Second Chance Pell to ultimately becoming PEPs, which is very exciting. So another part of this process as we're getting ready for Pell Reinstatement for July of 2023 is community engagement. And in the final Pell regulations, we have seen the important requirement for this relevant stakeholder group, as you can see here on the slide, and how it must include representatives of students who are incarcerated, organizations representing individuals who are confined or incarcerated, state higher education executive offices, accrediting agencies, and additional stakeholders as determined by the oversight entity. As we see this from both what has been happening in practice to these projected, you know, expectations for PEPs moving forward, it is clear that collaboration is an integral part of Pell Reinstatement, and this includes helping students ultimately obtain careers within their state. You probably know, 70% of all jobs in 2027 will require post-secondary education and training beyond high school. And providing education in prison helps people get prepared to join the workforce. So I'd like to bring my colleague Patrick Rodriguez from Georgia CHEP into the conversation with me now. Patrick, as the co-director of Georgia CHEP and as an organization that puts people who are system impacted front and center in your higher education and prison work, do you mind sharing with me first, you know, sharing a little bit of your history and the history of your organization? And then next, can you tell us about what some of those collaborations have entailed, including your BJA grant and your work with GDC?

- Thank you so much for that, Belinda. I might need you to repeat that question when halfway through. So it was a lengthy one, so I'm gonna try to give it a little bit of a summary. But before I even get into that, I just, first off, I have got to say obviously the thank yous to everybody who's on this call. Shout out Angel Sanchez for Monday. Second Chance Month this year feels really alive and energetic and I'm really excited to be a part of these opportunities. But I wanna name, you know, the shoulders that I stand on. I see a lot of

formerly incarcerated leaders through the participants, I looked through the participants list. I see a few people that I know, a few colleagues and everything. Welcome to this webinar. I'm super excited to see you here in this present space. And I wanna give a shout out to Jay Holder at the National Executive Council. In my role there as the Director of Public Affairs, we're super excited to be a part of this as well. And so whenever we talk about the implementation of bringing forth the organization, the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison, I was released from prison in December of 2019. And when I was released from prison in December of 2019, I had hope, I had vision, but I didn't know what those next steps were. I knew that I wanted to go to school, I didn't know what direction I was gonna go in, I just figured it was gonna happen one way or the other. And about December, or excuse me, around March of 2020, I came across a group of individuals that have been meeting and they were the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison. And I wanna sit right there for just one second and I wanna talk about the people that I surrounded myself with at that time. The people that I surrounded myself with saw more in me than I saw in myself. I would consider myself a very energetic person and a person that's really focused on the next step. But surrounding myself with individuals that saw something in me that I might not have seen in myself was really important. And the reason that I am speaking on that specifically, because the first word on the slide is community. Who is it that you are surrounding yourself with and do they have your best intentions and do they see more in you than you even see in yourself? And so right around November-ish of that time, I got nominated to be the co-executive director alongside Dr. Thomas Fabisiak, who I definitely wanna take a moment to shout out. He directs the Chillon Project. And at this moment right now, he's most likely in the prison working with his students, which is super exciting. We really appreciate him and I'm gonna bring him into this space, of course. And then after that we transitioned and we thought about what are the different things that we're going to do? What are the different spaces and what are the different programs? And there was a lot of thoughts and collaboration around the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison. And when we thought about Georgia as a whole, and we looked at, not necessarily where the state was, but where the students were in Georgia, the average reading level is at an eighth grade level if you're currently incarcerated. We thought about that and we presented that in the opportunity that came available in right around June, July-ish, I remember we were applying for the first BJA grant that we received and we created a pre-college pathway program. And that pre-college program provides math, reading, writing, preparation, and also the ACCUPLACER. Here in Georgia at the USG, you have to take the ACCUPLACER if you're a non-traditional student to make sure that you don't have to take, it's almost like a complimentary course, right? A course that'll bring you up to speed. And we thought about that and we designed this program. And the reason we designed it like that is because that's where the population here is. And so if we want to create programs, if we want to create change, then we need to think about not necessarily the 10,000 foot view about where is it that we want to go overall, but where are the people that we are serving? And Belinda, you asked me a little bit to share a little bit about my history. When I was in prison, I went to five facilities and I ran into one opportunity and it was a three college credit hour opportunity in Rome, Georgia at Floyd County Prison through the Vera college Inside Out program. And something that I saw that is just a burning image in my mind is the signup sheet. The signup sheet had names on the front and the back. There was only 10 to 12 spots that were available. I'm getting a little bit emotional right now because I'm thinking about the other 40 to 50 people that didn't get in the class. And every day when I wake up, I literally respond to the challenge of there not being enough signup sheets in day rooms across the state of Georgia. And so what we are doing now, I'm gonna bring it to the collaboration point, after I saw that, little did I know I was being subconsciously programmed to press forward in my life to push the most simplistic opportunity. It's complex in understanding when we think about PEP, the universities, you know, the accreditors, SACS, and all of those things. But simply speaking, we need more sign-up sheets in day rooms for more opportunities for people to get educated because we understand that education reduces recidivism. And I was literally, and I wanna shout out Jay Sanders, Assistant Commissioner here, who's on this call. Jay and I, I was giving a speech at the Atlanta Transitional Center and Jay was present at this speech and I was calling forth and responding to leadership in that moment, which I'll do the same thing in this, I was saying we must advocate for programming and educational opportunities for people that are incarcerated. This program helped me and little did I know, and probably little did Jay know, we were gonna cross paths again, and I was gonna be doing the same thing that I did in the Atlanta Transitional Center that I'm doing today, which is advocating for programs. And so we've been working together to both co-design, to both create space and also to provide opportunities for people who are incarcerated and to give them a pathway to which it is that they want to like go forward to. So I think, does that answer all your question, Belinda? I dunno if you're on camera or not, but I'm like.

- Yes sir, yeah, no, that's great.

- [Patrick] Okay, okay.

- That's great, my friend.

- You need to stay on with me, Belinda. I'm so sorry, everybody else.

- No, no, no, no, no, no. This this is great, my friend. Yeah, your heartfelt testimony about how this community work happens and how always, you know, putting the students front and center, you know, is just so important in this work, right? So, you know, that's a just really moving, you know, testimony of how, you know, your work both, you know, on the ground today, the history in the past, and how you're moving forward with these collaborations, my friend, is really great, so.

- I wanna build on one more part, and I think that this is one of the most important parts when we talk about collaboration with systems, right? We do understand that living in prison is not easy. I did not have a good time, I did not have a great time. I did not enjoy it, I was not happy. There were moments of depression, moments of sadness, calling my mom, missed my brother's graduation, one of my mentors passed away. All those things happen while I was incarcerated. And when you look and you think about somebody that goes through this specifically that I think that sometimes there's these narratives and there's these stereotypes as to what somebody that's been through incarceration can do. And so working with the Department of Corrections, working with the Bureau of Prisons, working with the Bureau Justice of Assistance, we're breaking down those traditional notions of what it means to be somebody that's been to prison. And then what we are saying as people that have been to prison, we're saying that I've been to prison and I've been through all of these egregious things, yet I don't want anybody else to have to go through the same thing that I went through. And I want more people to have an opportunity to be able to get educated because it changed me and they deserve the same opportunity too. So I just wanted to name that because sometimes, unfortunately the narrative of life has told us that people who have been to prison are not able to produce at the same level as people who have been.

- No, that's a very good point, my friend. And I think anyone who, I know that there's a lot of people on this call today that are actively doing work in this space such as yourself, my friend, and I know that they have the benefit of knowing, you know, when we look at students' transcripts and things like that, those students that are able to get their name on that list for those three credit classes or otherwise, they are overachieving on an average, far beyond traditional students in traditional college settings because they understand the importance of this. So that's a really good point, my friend. So thank you so much for that. As we're echoing, you know, this supporting of students, you know, like it's so important to, you know, yes, not only get students access, but also what are those high quality means to help a student be successful, yes, not only with their college classes, but also, you know, reentry efforts and everything that kind of goes along with helping a student. So it's really, you know, supporting students benefits everyone. As Amy Solomon had said, you know, it's generational, not only the people who are incarcerated, but their loved ones, their family members, the community at large, as Sean Addie had mentioned. And I think Jay had also mentioned as well that, you know, it creates safer spaces, you know, when we have, you know, this great, you know, quality program that's happening on the inside. So I'd like to kind of, you know, have a conversation with all three of us on the call here, Jay, Patrick, and Sean, just to kinda, you know, talk a little bit more about supporting students. And Jay, if it's okay with you, my friend, I thought I might start with you to see if you wouldn't mind sharing some of the developments that are happening within GDC to help support students, including, you know, hiring an educational director or other things that you all have been doing. If you wouldn't mind sharing that with us, my friend.

- Sure, and thanks to Patrick, like I said, a great partner there and I do remember crossing paths with him before he was on the outside and the leader that he was even within that facility, pushing for change there. So it's great to continue working with him. We, like I said earlier, we are trying to provide as many opportunities as possible. Just a snapshot kind of where we're at right now, we're currently in partner with eight different post-secondary providers at 23 different facilities across the state. Obviously that doesn't cover every one of our facilities, so we're always looking for additional ways to stretch those tax dollars even further. And in a lot of instances, a lot of this is coming through nonprofit work, through grants such as the

Second Chance Pell that we're talking about today. We recently crunched some numbers in preparation for this webinar. We currently have 527 students that are enrolled simply in post-secondary programs, that does not even include our vocational offerings, which are through our technical colleges. They're a very strong partner with us as well. As far as supporting our efforts, we have recently hired Dr. Jodi Ford as our Career, Technical and Higher Education Director, our CTHE director. Dr. Ford was most recently a warden at Whitworth Women's Facility, which is in northeast Georgia. It's a 447 bed facility. She's been an enthusiastic supporter of our education and program at that facility. We were constantly throwing programs at her to implement and tried out and figure out how to help us work the bugs out of a program. And she began her career as a probation officer, so she knows the spectrum from one end to the other. So it's great to be able to bring her over into this role and just to show her support, her facility, like we build really hard on that baseline of getting a GED or high school diploma. And then from there we take it to the next level. She pushes really hard and her facility right now is currently leading our statewide GED count. She has at a 447 bed facility, they've had 74 GEDs since the beginning of this fiscal year, which would've been July of last year. And since 2016 I went back and added it up, they've attained almost 600 GEDs at that facility. So she has pushed really hard to do that. And I, like I said, I know she'll continue to support us in this role. That facility also has our only women's seminary program in Georgia. She supported that as well. So she's a great addition to the team. She'll be directly involved in the implementation of these programs, working closely with Patrick and others. And so, like I said, that's some of the things we're doing. Like I said, I wish we had more resources. It's encouraging to see more resources being brought to the table because I, from my seat, I see how big the problem is and it's like, there's just never enough time, money, or resources to cover every angle of the problem. So, you know, collectively we can put our heads together and figure out how to build some synergy and touch as many lives as possible so that we ultimately do not see them returning to our facilities.

- Yeah, that's great. Thank you for sharing that overview of what's been happening, Jay. I think it's really exciting to have a new educational director and that wealth of experience that she's bringing to the position both with GED and, you know, technical trades and everything. It sounds really, really good. And I liked your point too about mentioning, you know, Amy Solomon had mentioned, you know, some other grants that are coming down the pipeline with BJA, you know, some of those sub, I forget what they were called, sub mm, sorry, there's gonna be smaller grants going out to partners in this space as part of a bigger grant. So I think that there could be potentially some other ways where this community working together can provide more of those resources there. Thinking about resources, Patrick, I'd like to bring you into the conversation, my friend. You know, you had briefly mentioned the BJA grant that you had, but the first one and you're actually the recipient of a second one. So congratulations on that, my friend. But specifically for that first one, if we were to do a little bit of a deeper dive on that one with some of those student support services that Georgia CHEP has been able to kind of create because of this BJA grant that you received, would you mind sharing a little bit about that, my friend?

- Yeah, and again, I really wanna, you know, first off I wanna shout out Jodi Ford who's gonna be stepping on as the supervisor for education here at the Department of Corrections. You know, I can't wait to work with you and I'm really excited to hopefully begin expanding these programs across the state of Georgia. And you said that we won two BJA grants. I wanna sit right there for a second and say that I'm formally incarcerated and Thomas and I won two of those. So to the formerly incarcerated people that are out there, the application is strong, it's a tough one and it takes some work and effort. If I can do it, you can do it. And when I was in the prison on Monday with a few people who have talked about it when we were in Miami, Angel Sanchez said, "You can't be what you can't see." If you're on here and you're formally incarcerated and you see me, you can be me, I am you and you are me, and you can reach the same level. Anything that I might get a hand clap for is not a hand clap for Patrick in the present. It's a hand clap for what you will become in the future. So I just wanna center that for one second because all too often, and even with, and I'll even speak to the DOJ and the BJA, et cetera, and the numbers of 80 facilities and 50,000 incarcerated people, we're believing in hope around here. So one thing about it is Georgia, we got some atrocious numbers and they're very high. We're not gonna shy away from that, but we are taking steps to get those numbers down, both probation and parole, and also people who are incarcerated by implementing community programs and also educational opportunities. As it relates to student support, I am so excited because our second grant really captures the individuals when they come home and also people who are already out. So we are going to be bringing on two reentry navigators at two different universities. So our first one is gonna be at Georgia State University and our second one is gonna be at Central Georgia

Technical College. And so we heard vocational and post-secondary opportunities, those are basically two different pathways that somebody could take. Vocational would be like plumbing or electrical or HVAC and then post-secondary would be like a bachelor's or a master's or something along the lines of humanities, sciences, et cetera. So what we did was, when we thought about this grant, we thought about the entirety of the students that we were serving here in the state of Georgia and we want to be able to create a pathway for students on campus at Central Georgia Technical College to get that application support, that financial aid walkthrough to be welcomed in a community, to create support groups, et cetera. And then we also wanted to do that at the traditional university system of Georgia. So instead of focusing on just one particular pathway, we understand that everybody is dynamic. I think Amy said the word incubator earlier and that word incubator means that you are encompassing a person for what it is that they so choose they want to do. And so creating that pathway, opening those doors, and I believe that Sean Addie said earlier that we are trying to push away from this notion of how many people don't succeed versus how many people do succeed. People don't succeed when there's only one path to success. They succeed when there are multiple paths to success and you're able to open different doors for them for whatever it is that they wanna do. And then also thinking about the geographical range in Georgia, our reentry navigator will be housed in Atlanta and we are hiring somebody that is in central Georgia down by the Macon area so they can work at the university and also begin understanding what reentry resources are available, which community partners are there that we can partner with, again to build this ecosystem of support for people. Because just as your slide earlier had all the hands, I keep on doing the hands 'cause you put the hand thing up, Belinda, you guys have all the hands like this or whatever, it takes a lot of hands, all hands on deck to help one person. But every single person that you help, I heard the word generational before, helps break that generational curse of people who get caught in the cycles of incarceration. And I think that's what we're really trying to do here.

- That's awesome, yeah, thanks for that, my friend. Yes, lots of hands, I could have made that an exceptionally busy slide, my friend. You're right, it does definitely take lots of hands and thank you also, incubator, that was the word I was actually thinking of before for those BJA grants. And you're right, it's part of that larger message though too. You know, it takes, you know, it takes a village, it takes a lot of hands and, you know, incubating, you know, the hopes and dreams of, you know, just beyond the immediate person and things like that, I think is really important, so thank you for that. Sean, I might just ask you a quick question, my friend, before I move on to the resource slides. You know, just thinking of in terms of support for programming as the department continues to plan for Pell Reinstatement, are there any, you know, any kind of like current grants that you might, you know, want the community consider or, you know, potentially future grants that you think could be beneficial?

- Sure, so one grant funding stream that I would highlight or, and maybe it's even remind people of, is TRIO funding. You know, if you're at a college or a university or an NGO, you can access TRIO funding and use that TRIO funding to help currently incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students if you're operating a prison education program. So that's a funding stream that already exists, that's already set up. We're hoping to find more opportunities to, you know, specifically support prison education programs and kind of all these constituent pieces to that that we know we need to make them a success. But that's a funding stream that is available right now and is already geared towards, and a lot of the services, there's a lot of overlap when you think about the Venn diagram with incarcerated and formally incarcerated students, you know, in terms of first generation college students and kind of other properties that they share. So that's one thing I would point to in terms of funding and support would be TRIO funds.

- Yep, thank you so much for that, Sean. I think that's a really good reminder for the audience. It's a long established program, TRIO, and just because a campus might have been using funds for A and B, don't forget that you could use it for X, Y, or Z for example. There's a lot of different ways that you can, you know, reexamine TRIO and how that could work, not only specifically on your campus but also in the community. That TRIO provides very generous funding for that. So please do keep that in mind. So, you know, thank you all for this wonderful discussion about what you all have been collaborating, implementing at your respective agencies to prepare Pell Reinstatement. Before I turn it over to Q and A, and I just wanna remind the audience today, we have the chat feature or actually there's a specific Q and A bubble that you can go into into Zoom to kind of put your question there. There is also the chat, I've got colleagues that are on the Zoom with me right now kind of monitoring that. So please feel free to put questions to these great speakers today in there as we're kind of moving forward. So before I turn it over to that, I just wanted to

share with you some of these excellent resources that had been mentioned, I think by a lot of our speakers today. Ugh, there was one item on here that had been adjusted, but apparently it wasn't fixed beforehand. So the PEP email address is actually pep@ed.gov. I'm sorry that there's that second V there. It was supposed to be changed beforehand, but apologies for that. Also, the Federal Student Aid Knowledge Center, there's the link there for that, it's very important, there's a repository of information all over the web when it comes to prison education programs where the Department of Education has put this kind of homepage where all that information is also linked on this landing page. So if you're interested in prison education programs and want to learn more about that, please go to that web address so that you have that available. I also wanna shout out the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison that Patrick is, you know, one of the founding directors of. Their organization address is there. Also the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison and Formally Incarcerated Graduates Network is also listed. These are just some of the resources. Please reach out, you know, either to Vera or others. There's so many particularly community based organizations that are led by system impacted people that really can be an amazing resource for you as you're thinking of not only programming inside of college, excuse me, in prisons for college or vocational programming, but also for the reentry efforts that are so important. And then also we have a wealth of Vera resources here. We've got them listed on the slide deck, which you'll be able to get access to that slide deck later so that you can click onto those direct links that we have available there as well. All right, so now I'm going to turn it over to the Q and A and I'm going to stop sharing my screen so you can see everyone's wonderful faces as we're doing the Q and A here. And I thought while we're actually waiting, please again, everyone put your question and answer, excuse me, your questions in the chat there so that we can start directing those for you all. But one question I wanted to ask for you, Patrick, is, you know, you've shared some of the work that you've been doing thus far, a great history and what's currently going on. I was wondering if you wouldn't mind sharing Georgia CHEP's focus moving forward, my friend.

- Yeah, thank you so much. So our focus moving forward is big, it's bright. We're gonna go after more BJA funding. We're gonna partner with more community organizations. Shout out to Angela Marshall at the Atlanta Technical Center, which we've done some co-writing together. I'm excited about that. But I wanna center my team, Christopher Gleason, Landers Thomas, Danny Rivera, all of them are directly impacted. And so our next steps are, yes, the bringing together a vision, but it's also centering and leaning on the lived experience of those that we employ that can help us and guide us in different facets and areas of lives that we want to touch. So you, we won our second grant, which is a reentry opportunity. For me, I see our next opportunities as both continuing on the reentry side of things, but also breaking Georgia down into different regions. So we're gonna hit Central Georgia. We still have Southeast by Savannah, we still have Southwest, Northeast and Northwest. And so really thinking about mapping out where are the facilities that are closest to the universities and how can we get them on board and get get them onsite on trained, working with technical assistance, basically with the universities, explaining the process of what does it mean to put somebody through the Pell application process through financial aid, and then also what does it take for a university to be able to implement those. Secondarily, I also direct Georgia State University's Prison Education Project, so I work directly with Georgia State University. I wanna do a quick shout out and just say that we're graduating our first class starting in May, which we're super excited about. We're gonna have about 18 graduates that are gonna be finishing up with their associate's degree at Walker State Prison. It's been a long time coming and we are the first university system of Georgia School to do so since 1971 according to our research. And again, that's almost 50 years prior to graduation. But it's exciting because we're building on what's next. And the reason I highlight working with Georgia State University is because understanding the different metrics of success at the university, the timetable of working in semesters, working through years, how long does it take to get a program up and running? Here at the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison, we're here to center the voices of people who have been directly impacted and we're also here to help other universities understand how to create educational opportunities at different facilities around the state of Georgia.

- Awesome, that's fantastic. Thank you for that, Patrick. We've actually got a question in the chat that's like they're interested in actually connecting with you. If you are willing, I know I've put the web address up there, you could feel free to put that in the chat too, my friend. If you want to share your email address, feel free. But if you also just wanna put the web address in there, that would be really great, my friend.

- Yeah, so I'm gonna give my social media a shoutout, Patrick Lee Rod on Instagram, Twitter, Clubhouse, you know, whatever their social media's out there, you can follow me online, that's patrickleerod. And then

my email is patrick.rodriquez@gachep.org. That's patrick.rodriquez@gachep.org. Give me an email, more than happy to get on the calendar with you, 15, 20 minutes, talk about, you know, whatever it is you'd like to talk about and happy to help in any way, and shout out. And especially encouraging anybody that's formally incarcerated that wants to understand this process, I'm more than willing to work with you on that, so.

- Great, and actually one other question while I've got you on here too, Patrick, that would be great, my friend, you talked about how, you know, you've been very successful as a coalition to receive the two BJA grants. Could you talk a little bit about that process? You know, Amy Solomon had mentioned that there are these incubator grants and other things. You know, as you guys were kind of like working on that application, you know, together, did you have a good brain trust to kind of draw from as you were working on those proposals and or have you found other grants that you thought were really, you know, beneficial to Georgia CHEP or have you been able to help other Georgia CHEP members as part of that coalition, you know, with grants and things like that?

- Yeah, so first off, I wanna shout out Laughing Gull Foundation. They funded us as well with a small gift. And we're in the process of working with a few other grant making opportunities. Unfortunately there aren't as many for prison education just yet. But I think that at the philanthropy level, we're trying to get traditional education funders to understand the value of prison education and for them to begin funneling. Shout out to Ascendium and also for JFF for really working to push that narrative at a high level. I'm gonna be honest, I'm just gonna kick it straight 'cause that's what I do, it's a hard process. You gotta be at Grants.gov, JustGrants. You have to create, you know, you have to have your EIN, you gotta create both sides of things. You gotta go through a financial training process. I'm a certified federal financial management. Again, there's like 10,000 words that, like FFR and all those different things. And honestly, I guess this is gonna sound like not necessarily the most technical assistance type of thing, but it's gonna take resilience to get through these applications. It's gonna take understanding that you can do it and not letting outside noise really distract you from getting it done. And then also like, it's a great idea to have a big vision. It's amazing and I think that everybody has an idea for where we want things to go, but can you take that and make it simple and understandable so that other people can trust what it is that you're working to build out? And so I think the reason we won both of our grants is because we have a vision for Georgia to reduce its incarceration rates, you know, for there to be less people on probation and parole and everybody gets behind that. But what's the first step that you're gonna take, Patrick? Well, we gotta meet the students where they're at. So let's do pre-college and we were actually able to create three different sub-grants, one for Life University, Georgia State University, and Common Good Atlanta to where we're able to provide, you know, money for them to be able to implement that programming through the coalition as the lead grant writer. And so really breaking things down simply is very difficult to do sometimes, but I want to encourage you to do that and then pay attention to the details of what is in the application. So the application, if it asks for an MOU with the DOC and you don't have an MOU with the DOC, it could disqualify you. If it asks you for a match, whether that's the 60% match or 40% and you don't have that, it could disqualify you. So even the calls are about 15 pages, go through all of those calls and look at everything that it's saying. Highlight the different parts that are important to you or the different parts that you think that you might not be able to meet and really, you know, reach out to the BJA or understand that that might not be the grant for you. And there might be another one that is there. So a thousand reentry grants have been given out. So think about that, that is a huge number, that is a big deal. That means that if a thousand other organizations and a thousand other people could get it, then you could too. That's actually a really positive thing to say. So again, just wanna encourage everybody to really push for what that is and push through with it. And then you can also learn everybody who received it is public information. You can go through the BJA and you can look at some of the other, you know, things that were designed in other parts of the nation as we know that some solutions work in some places, some don't work in some places, but there's also some things that can be put in other places that will work there as well.

- Thank you so much for that information, Patrick. That's really valuable I think, you know, for the community to hear how that process has actually worked for you. And yes, there's those really large BJA grants that you got, but as you also mentioned, you've gotten some smaller grants as you know, you all like Laughing Gull and others, you know, to kind of help you with this. So I think, yeah, building that brain trust, you know, with the consortium I think has been really valuable. And obviously you've been very successful with this, so congratulations to you and your colleagues. There has been another question about coalitions,

Patrick, and you know, one of the audience members has asked, you know, is there a central place to use, to review all of the different prison education coalitions? You know, we know Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison is one of the largest in the country. There's lots of other excellent coalitions that are going on as well. And I know that you and some of your team are also working on a South Carolina coalition as well. Could you share a little bit about, you know, have you all perhaps with South Carolina what you've been doing with your coalition or you know, other coalitions that perhaps you have tapped into as your brain trust as you were actually building the Georgia Coalition, for example, do you have anything to kind of share about coalitions, my friend?

- Yeah, I mean, Belinda, [106:51]we've been chatting for years. You were in South Carolina before you went to Vera, you know what I mean? Let's center that for a second. You were, you know, a help with that. And also Jay Holder, you know, Jay Holder at the National Executive Council. You know, he came up with the design, thought about the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison and really pushed that narrative forward. As it relates to more of on the kind of the technical side of things, coalitions are important because they include the various stakeholders that it takes in order to support somebody that's been through the prison system. And so yes, we are working with the South Carolina Coalition for Higher Education in Prison. I've worked with the Mississippi Coalition for Higher Education in Prison. I believe next week I'm actually gonna have a meeting with Florida as well. And the reason we're having these conversations is because the singular, it can happen but the singular doesn't last. And so whenever we think about and we look at like the direction of where we're going, just in general, I think it's better to work together as a group than for any one entity to pull too far ahead and then to bring everybody in so that everybody can play a part, recognize that there is a strength that you bring to the table, but there's also strengths that my partners to the left and right bring to the table that I just can't do. I can't do what you do, you can't do what I do. But together we can support each other. And also, just to take it again to a little bit more of the technical, when you think about the PEP regulations, we understand that there are going to be stakeholders and groups that are coming together to review the PEP applications along with the Department of Corrections, et cetera. And so that can be a starting point when you're thinking about who you want to be a part of that and bringing proximity of formally incarcerated people to the departments, to the different systems that exist and having those voices be able to humanize in different kinds of ways, so.

- Excellent, thank you so much, Patrick. I know I've like put a lot of questions to you at once, my friend, apologies, but they were just really good trains of thought as we were kind of moving through there, my friend. So I'll let you off the hot seat and I'm gonna actually pivot now to a few other questions, but thank you for that fantastic information that you shared, my friend. Okay, there were a couple of questions that came in just about the technical side of things that I'll have a chance to kind of just provide a little bit of feedback here. But then I also might invite Sean onto the call with us here just to kind of answer one of the questions was, will lifers who have no chance of parole or no chance of being released have access to these Pell grants? Yes, my friend, that is in the regulations, regardless of sentence length or conviction history, is noted in the regulations. So I wanted to make sure that you are aware of that. And then also curious to know about how the information about Pell is being distributed to students directly. There's an actual fact sheet that was actually just released recently by the Department of Education. I'm gonna actually turn it over to you, Sean, if you wanted to provide a little bit more information about that, my friend.

- Sure, thank you, Belinda. So what we're hoping to do with this fact sheet geared towards incarcerated students or potential or incarcerated potential students is to try to get out through as many mechanisms as possible. You know, logistically we wanna make it one page, so if it's photocopied, if it's passed around, kind of all that information is in one place. We're talking, we're going to be talking with all of the big tablet companies that operate inside of correctional spaces and trying to get that fact sheet on that tablet so that, you know, an incarcerated person can see that, can get the information, can find out as much as possible. We're gonna be talking with the Bureau of Prison as well, working to disseminate it across Bureau of Prisons Correctional facilities and also conducting outreach to different state directors of correctional education to make sure that they're sharing the information as well. And again, as I mentioned, we're trying to make it be one page and then also including sort of in that fact sheet a mailing address so people who do have questions, we know that there are issues for incarcerated people with 1-800 numbers with calling numbers so that people can, if they have follow up questions, reach out to folks at the department. But we're trying as best as we can to get that information out to as many people as possible. So the fact sheet has been released and then we're gonna be working to get that out as soon as possible.

- Thanks for that, Sean. We've also got another question that relates to the FAQs that I know the Department of Education has been very active. I think we're up to 30 that have been done at this point. And I know that Aaron Washington has a whole slew of other ones that he's working through now. With those FAQs, those same mediums that you had mentioned, like technology companies and things like that, is that something someone had asked what are your plans for distributing, sorry, the FAQs to incarcerated students, is that potentially another mechanism of how that information could be shared with them, my friend?

- Yeah. And those same conversations with technology companies will also be seeing if we can get a, you know, it whitelisted, some way to get a link to that page shared for incarcerated people. But that's our plan is to, it's a little bit harder because it's a changing list. It's, you know, it's constantly getting new FAQs updated and it's a website listed document. So, but we'll see what can be done.

- Hmm, that's a good point, I hadn't thought about that. I know definitely with the whitelisting, that could potentially be worked with the technology companies, but yeah, that's a interesting thought there about actually having it perhaps as a document. So, okay, great, thank you so much for that, Sean. Alright, so let's see here. I'm gonna try to turn it over to you, Jay, so that I make sure that we are, you know, including you in this conversation as well, my friend. I know that Patrick had mentioned, you know, some of those relevant stakeholders for example, about how they've been doing that with Georgia CHEP, and I know that you had mentioned, my friend, that you've just employed a new educational director, you know, for GDC. So I know that there's still steps that are kind of moving forward within GDC, but we had a question from the audience about how is Georgia potentially planning on coordinating those relevant stakeholders as needed for that new PEP process. Is that something that you all have started kind of thinking about? I know we've still got, you know, time before Pell Reinstatement, but would you mind sharing just a little bit about your potential process or even if you don't have a concrete process yet for engaging with relevant stakeholders, have you all started thinking about, you know, how that could move forward, for example?

- Sure, and you know, we have not firmed it up yet, but obviously we'll work closely with Patrick and other institutions that have gotten these Pell programs to develop these stakeholder. And we already, I think in a lot of instances, we know the individuals that we need to bring to the table. We've just got to formalize it and create, like I said, the relationships I think are there already with the schools, with the formerly incarcerated that are out, you know, like Patrick working hard to make some things happen. So we've just gotta formalize those and create, you know, some oversight to guide this process. But like I said, for the most part, I really believe we've got a pretty good idea of the direction we need to go. We're just a little early in the process still.

- Sure, yeah, no, I totally understand that. I know that there's, you know, everyone's at their different stages, whether that's corrections, colleges, accreditors, and the Department of Education is in this because I know it's a very, very complex kind of process as we're moving forward. I know that you had mentioned, Jay, earlier about like the number of, you know, you have close to 80 facilities I believe you'd mentioned at the start when we showed that map, my friend, and you'd mentioned that you've got really good coverage and potentially 25 approximately kind of facilities right now. As you're thinking forward, and obviously this is gonna be a lot, you know, probably the next couple of years moving forward, I know ideally both you and you know, so GDC and Georgia CHEP would like to have access in as close to as many of those 80 kind of moving forward. You know, are there ways that you're thinking about potentially kind of, you know, leveraging or moving things up, you know, so that you potentially could get more coverage? Are you hoping to potentially kind of expand with your current college partners? Are you hoping that some more colleges within the state of Georgia will actually, you know, reach out to you and Jodi to kind of see about being partners? What's your kind of like, you know, five year vision perhaps with this kind of moving forward?

- Yeah, so there's several pieces of that puzzle we're working on. There is the University of West Georgia over in Carrollton, which is on the west side of the state, right on the Alabama line. They are getting the ball rolling with one of our institutions that previously has not had post-secondary. So we're in that process with them right now. One of the key pieces though, I think for us at Georgia is technology. We've gotta get technology in place. So one of our first things is the institutions who do not currently have wireless internet. We're working on that. We've gotta have good secured wireless internet. We recently received some funding and so that is one of, and that will not only help the education process, it'll help every other process within

the facility. So doing that, but then the ultimate goal, and we're looking at a pilot right now and I don't wanna say too much about it 'cause I don't wanna jinx it, with the major technology companies where that we could put a device, and I'm just gonna keep it at that, in the dorm. I don't wanna, like I said, I give too much away if I talk to it, but get it all the way downstream to the dorm level so that we could have distance learning where if I've got a program like Common Good or one of the other ones or, and I've got a really good teacher, facilitator, whatever for this program, but I have the ability to broadcast it to other facilities across the state. If you look at our map, most of our facilities, if you draw a line diagonal across our state from Columbus to Macon to Augusta, the majority of our facilities are south of that line in very rural parts of Georgia. So many times there may not be a school close by that's big enough or willing to enter this space. But if we've got other schools that are, and good internet, good technology, good connectivity, then we can bring that, like I said, further downstream to the dorm level so that somebody could continue their education, you know, much like folks do on the outside with online programs. And then, like I said, we're working on that. We've got some very promising things going right now in a pilot we hope to kick off real soon to give it a test.

- No, that's great, yeah, I like innovation. I think all of us are being kind of, you know, encouraged to be innovative, right? As we're kind of like moving forward in this space and you know, what may have started as just like one or two programs, you know, here or there, you know, what can kind of bring this to scale. And I know that's one of the things that Vera has been doing with our technical assistance. Yes, high quality, but also bringing that to scale. So I'm glad that, you know, with what you're sharing, Jay, but then also with your new director that you've got there too, it sounds like there's gonna be a lot of innovation coming, you know, outta Georgia and with your partnership with Georgia CHEP and others. So that's exciting to hear, so thank you for that, my friend, I appreciate it. Sean, I'm gonna bring it back to you, my friend. We've got a couple of kind of Pell Reinstatement specific questions here and you know, certainly if they can't be answered immediately, we could certainly bring them back to the pep@ed.gov. But one of the first questions that we'd received here is as follows, are community corrections eligible for these funds? So, and then the background is, "My program works with individuals "under community supervision" and those in our work release facility." So I think we're getting to the location there. Someone has said that, you know, what is considered community corrections in their perspective. They're saying, "My program works "with individuals under community supervision "and those in our work release facility." Do you have any initial thoughts on that? But we could also ask the person that posed that initial question to perhaps put some supplementary information in the chat there too.

- Sure, so what it's going to come down to is where the, you know, where the individuals are staying, where they're residing, you know, if it's in a jail, a prison, a halfway house, a juvenile justice facility, then they would, and there's a list of other area facilities that qualify for the prison education program, but that's gonna be the determinant in terms of that community corrections program. So if they're in a prison or if they are, you know, it's really kinda where are you sleeping at night, kind of that you need to look at. And if you're sleeping not in one of those facilities or you're sleeping at your house, then you are just a.

- Traditional help.

- A traditional student. Yeah, traditional, you wouldn't need to go through that prison education program process.

- Yep, no, that makes a good, yeah, that's a good reminder there that that location is really important. So for those of you that, you know, as I put that definition up there, that slide, you know, if you feel like your particular circumstance of the students that you're potentially serving isn't perhaps crystal clear, I highly recommend that you reach out to that pep@ed.gov to get immediate clarity from the department, you know, there. But I think, yeah, what Sean has said, it really depends on that location of where you are kind of housed, where you're sleeping. So yes, if we didn't answer your question there, please feel free to follow up at pep@ed.gov to get that response. Let me see here, I know we're starting to get near the close here. Let me see if there's another one that I want to bring up here. We've got another question that's related to pre-apprenticeship program programs. So I'll ask you that one, Sean. The question is, how are pre-apprenticeship programs, if at all, integrated to PEP efforts, would they be considered PEP eligible pre-apprenticeship?

- I think as long as they were Title 4 eligible, the pre-apprenticeship programs would be PEP eligible. That's gonna be the determinant for those pre-apprenticeships.

- All right, lemme see here. I have a question, and this may not be for any particular person, but I'll put it out there. I know Jay had just mentioned the remote side of things. One of the questions is do you offer, and I'm assuming the question is, does PEP cover, does PEP cover remote or Pell, does Pell cover remote project-based or experiential learning opportunities for individuals who are incarcerated? I know one of the things that I'll immediately mention is, is it that credential? Because that slide that I went back to like, you know, it has to for Title 4, you know, has to be some kind of academic credential there. So when I hear experiential learning, I'm not sure if that leads to a credential. So that would be what I say there, but I wasn't sure if, Sean, perhaps you had anything that you wanted to add to that, to that response for that question.

- Not at the second, Belinda.

- Okay, my friend. I think I've covered most of these here. Let me see if there's anything else. Let's see, du, du, du, okay, yep, there's another one here. Came in, are there efforts to make sure incarcerated students have additional funding to cover college costs not covered by the Pell Grant, like state financial aid? One of the things immediately that I will say, but then I definitely wanna, you know, have Sean come in here. For those of you that may be new to this space, with Pell being drawn down by the individuals who are incarcerated, their cost of programming must be covered by that federal Pell Grant. So I think Sean will be able to tell us the exact amount, I think it's 7,000 or 6,700, that that should encompass everything, both, you know, tuition, technology, you know, textbooks, things of that nature. When it comes to the state funds, a student wouldn't be needed to draw on those because again, the federal funds are supposed to cover it. But we'll turn it over to you, Sean, to see if you had anything that you wanted to add there, my friend.

- Sure, and I think, and correct me if I'm wrong, Belinda, I think you know what we're seeing is more states are implementing state-based funding for higher education in prison. So it's just not just a federal effort. I just saw Oklahoma's looking at using state funding to pay for post-secondary education in prison. And so we're working at the department with other groups and organizations, National Governor's Association, we actually just met with earlier this week, really just to get the word out about Pell and to share information about kind of state-based funding as well. And you know, there are some states that already have, you know, as I mentioned, funding, you know. California has the community college waiver that's been in place for, you know, almost a decade now to pay for education. You know, New York State has the Tuition Assistance Program. New Jersey has a similar model as well. And so I think what we're trying to do is, you know, we realize Pell is a start, but also to have it be that there are other models as well so that, you know, potentially a student could use that state-based funding while they're incarcerated and then when they come out, they could use that Pell to not only help pay for their education, but also to help with housing and transportation and childcare and kind of all the other needs that pop up that exist obviously when someone's incarcerated, but become kind of even more stark once someone is released when they have to juggle all of those. So it's something we're very aware of and you know, we're trying as much as we can on our end to address it.

- Thanks for that, Sean, I really appreciate that, my friend. I see another couple of questions that have just come in. So Dr. Cash-Greene had asked, "Does Pell cover correspondence courses?" Yes it does, but there are certain restrictions on it with like the percentage of it. Sean, did you wanna mention that? So correspondence, yes, like the paper base, but it is a financial aid capacity there to the amount, I think it's up to 50% of the number. I forget exactly how it's worded, it's a financial aid issue, but there is a portion of Pell Grants that can be used for correspondence. Did you wanna add anything to that, Sean?

- I don't think so.

- Yep, okay, yep, all right. And Kelsey, your question was, sorry if I've missed it, but non-credit, whoops, my mouse just went a little bit, non-credit classes covered, as long as they receive a credential, it counts. That one is a little bit, it depends. Kelsey, I might ask you a follow-up question with that one, my friend, is about to like what credential, like is it a, you know, a certificate, a associate's degree, a bachelor's degree? Typically they are credit to draw down that Pell. So I'd probably need a little bit more specificity as to that

credential, my friend. But that could also be one that could go to the pep@ed.gov for it. But yes, credential definitely needs to be, but yes, some more clarification, that'd be good. Okay, I wanna be mindful of time here. So let me just take one more here. "For most," and this is Jean, "For most institutions, "Pell would probably not cover the full cost of attendance. "So states would need a waiver to bring cost "of attendance down to no more than full Pell. "What about tech supplies?" Jean, I think we just answered that one before, my friend, about like that covering and then Sean had mentioned like the state funding that the Department of Ed is kind of like working more on that. If I did indeed misread your question there, my friend, I'm not the best facilitator here. I'm sorry, there's a lot of questions that are coming up here, but yes, but let me know, Jean, if I didn't actually share that one there, my friend. All right, okay, so I need to be mindful of the remaining time that we have here. I just wanted to thank everyone, the National Reentry Resource Center for being a part of this, you know, hosting this. I wanna thank all the speakers that were available with us today and answering all those questions. If I did not get to them all, I do apologize and please feel free to reach out to me. I've got my information here, bwheeler@vera.org, but we've also shared the pep@ed.gov, excuse me, @ed.gov email address. So please feel free to forward questions there as well. So then just finally, thank you all so much. I wanted to remind you all to check out the NRRC website and other exciting Second Chance Pell, excuse me, Second Chance Month events that are happening. Thank you all again and I hope you have a great rest of the day.