



BARBALUNGA FOR SHERIFF

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“Time For Change – Justice That Works”

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Seven County Jails Receive State Grants For Inmate Re-Entry Job Training Berkshire County Jail Is Not One of Them

BERKSHIRE COUNTY—Seven County Jails across Massachusetts have been awarded state funding to help inmates get on-the-job training with area businesses. Sheriff’s offices in **Franklin, Hampshire, Suffolk, Essex, Worcester, Bristol and Plymouth Counties** were all awarded funds as part of the \$1.68 million in grants from the Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program. **Berkshire County Jail was not on the list** for new job development funds.

According to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce development, the Berkshire County House of Correction did not submit a grant request from this fund, **“but hope to see them apply in the future.”**

Seven other county jails applied and received funds. “This is a real loss for our inmates in Berkshire County,” said Alf Barbalunga. **“This funding would have lined up real jobs, at real local companies, for real inmates who want to work.”**

“This is exactly the kind of funding I’d like to see coming into our county,” said sheriff candidate Alf Barbalunga. “When I become sheriff,” Barbalunga said, “I will aggressively seek job development funding to benefit our inmates--and our local businesses--who are looking hard for new employees.

According to Barbalunga, the job trainings announced are in high-demand fields such as construction (roofing, painting, and carpentry), transportation, food processing, and hospitality. “We’ve got Berkshire County businesses who fit this profile and need workers,” Barbalunga said. “I hate to see opportunities to create jobs for inmates going by without Berkshire County getting a piece of the action.”

The new job training awards were announced this month by the Baker-Polito Administration’s Task Force on Economic Opportunity for Populations Facing Chronically High Rates of Unemployment, which is chaired by the Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development. The Task Force found that “individuals within prison populations experienced complex needs that require intensive interventions for them to be successful in securing and maintaining employment. Access to adequate re-entry services was identified as a barrier to employment that disproportionately impacts the target populations and leads to greater recidivism.”

Governor Charlie Baker said: “These Re-Entry Grants are focused on evidence-based outcomes that best prepare those who have served their time to find employment that helps support themselves and their families.”

“What I like about this grant program,” Barbalunga noted, “is that it brings together county jails, community colleges, and local businesses to help people with chronic rates of unemployment. This is exactly what we need to help inmates find meaningful careers in the community they live in. It would have been a total win for Berkshire County.”

To see a list of the **14 programs awarded**, and the range of businesses participating, see:

<https://www.mass.gov/news/formerly-incarcerated-citizens-to-receive-on-the-job-training-through-programs-funded-with-168-million-in-re-entry-grants>

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