

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones  
Speaker of the House of Delegates  
H-101 State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Speaker Jones,

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I hereby veto House Bill 482 – *Occupational Licensing and Certification – Criminal History – Predetermination Review Process*.

The primary aim of House Bill 482 is to establish a predetermination review process for Marylanders to determine whether their criminal history disqualifies them for certain State licenses or certifications. Many returning citizens will never pursue a license for many good-paying and high-demand occupations due to simple uncertainty about whether they will be denied licensure at the conclusion of their training. The goal of the legislation is to remedy that uncertainty, and Delegate Andrea Fletcher Harrison should be recognized for her leadership in this space. This goal has my full support. In fact, my administration recommended that this policy be adopted in December of 2024 when the Government Efficiency Commission published its first report including recommendations on activating individuals with criminal history in the work force.

However, despite the progress that could be achieved by the establishment of this predetermination review process, the bill was amended in the final days of the legislative session to remove the Department of Health (MDH) and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) from existing law governing disqualifications based on criminal history.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed Chapter 568 of 2019 to establish parameters for when the State may deny an individual an occupational license or certification based upon their criminal history. Specifically, this important law bars departments from denying an occupational license or certificate application because the applicant has previously been convicted of a crime, unless the department determines that: (1) there is a direct relationship between the applicant's previous conviction and the specific occupational license or certificate sought; or (2) the issuance of the license or certificate would involve an unreasonable risk to property or to the safety or welfare of specific individuals or the general public. This law limits the lookback period for criminal background denials to seven years after the applicant completed sentences and the law does not apply to crimes which require registration on the sex offender registry. Based upon a recent review by the Government Efficiency Commission, detailed in the report referenced above, the Department of Health issues 144

credentials, second among principal departments only to the Department of Labor which issues 231 credentials. As a result of this legislation, none of the licenses or certifications issued by the Department of Health would be subject to statute requiring that they may only deny a credential based upon the criminal history of an applicant if the crime was germane to the occupation.

While there are both positive and negative impacts of House Bill 482, it is my view that exempting the Department of Health and its independent licensing boards from existing standards outweighs the benefits of a predetermination review process. Maryland cannot afford to permanently disenfranchise individuals with criminal histories from large sections of the economy should they pose no risk. My administration has led on providing opportunities for redemption and reintegration into society for individuals who have made poor choices in the past but have faced the legal consequences and are prepared for the next chapter in their lives. Most recently, my administration introduced – and the General Assembly passed – the Expungement Reform Act which expands expungement eligibility and opens pathways to work, wages, and wealth for Marylanders, including returning citizens who have served their time and fulfilled their rehabilitation requirements.

Given the passage of the Expungement Reform Act and other actions that the State has taken to re-enfranchise returning citizens, I know that the General Assembly and my administration share these values. While House Bill 482 is well-intentioned, the amendment unintentionally undercuts those shared values. I look forward to collaborating with the General Assembly to continue making progress on this important issue, and I hope to work directly with Delegate Harrison in that effort. However, for the reasons provided in this letter, I have vetoed House Bill 482.

Sincerely,

Wes Moore  
Governor