



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Chairman William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for **Senate Bill 635 – Landlords and Prospective Tenants – Residential Leases – Criminal History Review (Maryland Fair Chance in Housing Act)**, a bill lowering the number of years of criminal history reviewed in a reusable tenant screening report from 7 years to 3 years. Senate Bill 635 will also require landlords to provide a physical copy of a lease application denial that states each reason for the denial. **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

As seen across the United States, a person's criminal history can be a major barrier to finding housing. For Black prospective renters with a criminal background in Maryland, racial discrimination in the housing/rental market makes this a more arduous task.

People of color in Maryland, specifically Black people, are disproportionately affected by rental applicant screenings that include a criminal background check. The disproportionate number of arrests of Black people lends itself to the disadvantages that Black renters face when applying for a rental property. Even when these screenings are equally applied to everyone regardless of race or ethnicity, landlords have used discriminatory loopholes, including signaling and preferential treatment, in order to deny housing to Black applicants.

Senate Bill 635 will ensure that Black renters in Maryland will have an equal opportunity to access rental housing, regardless of their criminal history. This bill will require that landlords offer concrete reasons to deny a person the ability to rent their property. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports **Senate Bill 635** and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland