



WRITTEN TESTIMONY
**THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDING PAROLE SUPERVISION FEES
& FEES FOR DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING IN MARYLAND
(SB 728 / HB 531)**

Submitted by: BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development)

BUILD strongly supports the passage of SB 728 / HB 531, repealing Parole Supervision Fees and Fees for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Testing.

Over the last year, BUILD – working with Turnaround Tuesday – has listened to more than 300 returning citizens and their families primarily in Baltimore City, but also around the state, to learn about the issues that most impact people returning home from prison.

Again and again, we heard stories about the impact of parole fees – \$52 per month for most people returning home from incarceration. It was ratified as a top concern for our leaders’ work on criminal justice issues around the state.

- We heard stories from people struggling to pay these fees at a time when they did not have a job or housing;
- We heard about people who were consistently afraid of being sent back to prison or who considered actions that may have led to recidivism because they were behind on payments;
- We heard about people who did not know they qualified for an exemption or did not know how to apply;
- We heard about people in debt, who were now in collections and owed 17% in interest on top of monies they should have been exempt from in the first place.

Today, you will hear a story about Alicia Shaw and her direct experience with this issue and how it has impacted her.

But it has been a problem for decades. It has put barriers in front of people returning home, encouraging recidivism for decades. It was the subject of a study by the Brennan Center for Justice in 2009, nearly 15 years ago. But these fees have continued to impact some of the most vulnerable people in our state.

The Brennan Center’s 2009 report – which you will hear more about today – includes some of the following highlights:

- It recommended that parole fees be eliminated;
- It found that the system of applying for exemptions was broken;
- It found that the State of Maryland pursues people who do not pay for debt, adding a 17% surcharge;
- It found that Maryland is one of the only states in the immediate region that charges these fees;
- It found that most people on parole qualified for exemptions under the law, but very few people applied or knew how to apply; BUILD has found that this continues to be the case.
- It found that the small sum of monies collected goes to the general fund; it does not support the needs of parole or of returning citizens.

In a state that we hope will leave no one behind, the time is now to take action and end parole fees in Maryland once and for all.

BUILD's History and Track Record on this issue

BUILD – Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development – is a broad-based, non-partisan coalition of more than 35 religious congregations, non-profits, and schools in Baltimore. Founded in 1977, BUILD has a long, productive track record acting on issues related to housing, jobs, schools, safety, and more. This has included the creation of the nation's first living wage ordinance in Baltimore City and working with the state legislature to invest \$1 billion in rebuilding Baltimore City's aging school infrastructure in recent years. We are part of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the nation's oldest and largest multi-faith organizing network in the United States.

In 2014, BUILD leaders in East Baltimore worked together to launch Turnaround Tuesday, a workforce development movement that connects returning citizens to living wage jobs through direct relationships with employers like Johns Hopkins, the University of Maryland, and more. To date, Turnaround Tuesday has connected more than 1,800 people – mostly returning citizens – to living wage jobs at employers and anchor institutions across Baltimore. Of those, 71% stay for at least two years.