

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in favorable support with amendments of House Bill 482. Also, thank you Delegate Harrison for sponsoring this bill – and for your support of amendments to add to the current procedures rather than replace them. My name is Jamel Freeman and I'm here today to share my personal experiences with the current state law and licensing processes.

In 2023 I began the application process for my alcohol and drug counseling certification. My application was first delayed for a conviction I had in 2000. The process was a yearlong and wrought with frustration partially due to staffing shortages which slowed the ability for the Department of Health to process applications within 60 days, which is a COMAR regulation. Unfortunately, the lack of transparency in the occupational licensing process for people with a non-violent criminal history was a significant contributor to my frustrations during this process. The current process costs me five potential job opportunities.

We should maintain the protections that are available for people whose criminal history is over seven years in the past. I urge the committee to not remove the current language of the statutes, listed on page 3 of the proposed legislation, Section (f) (2) lines 8 through 13: “If a period of 7 years or more has passed since an applicant completed serving the sentence for a crime, including all imprisonment, mandatory supervision, probation, and parole, and the applicant has not been charged with another crime other than a minor traffic violation, as defined in § 10-101 of this article, during that time, a department may not deny an occupational license or certificate to the applicant solely on the basis that the applicant was previously convicted of a crime.”

I respectfully disagree with last year's fiscal note, which suggests that this system of predetermination and transparency would deter individuals from pursuing licensure. Improved transparency, especially at the beginning of the process, would increase the likelihood of success for those seeking licensure – especially if these new processes are added to, rather than replace, the existing procedures.

I urge you to pass House Bill 482 with the proposed amendment, which will bring much-needed clarity and efficiency to the licensing process for people with criminal histories. This reform will empower individuals, like me, to achieve their goals without unnecessary obstacles. I respectfully request the Economic Matters Committee to support a favorable report to pass House Bill 482. Thank you all for your time and allowing me to share my experiences, strengths, and hopes.

Jamel Freeman

Reference

Department of Legislative Services. (2025). EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW. [Brackets] Indicate Matter Deleted from Existing law. *hb0482* HOUSE BILL 482. In Maryland General Assembly (pp. 1–4). General Assembly of Maryland Department of Legislative Services.
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/hb/hb0482F.pdf>