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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 482 WITH AMENDMENTS**  
**Occupational Licensing and Certification – Criminal History – Predetermination**  
**Review Process**  
*Economic Matters Committee*  
**February 12, 2025**

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 482 with proposed amendments that make occupational licensing or certification more available for individuals with criminal histories. This bill would establish a predetermination process for applicants to request a review of their criminal history to determine whether it would disqualify them from obtaining the license or certificate they are pursuing. It will also require certain Maryland departments to provide remedy steps for the individual. We seek amendments to ensure that the processes envisioned by the bill add to rather than replace existing procedures.**

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change respectfully proposes the following amendment:**

**Do not remove the statute, 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.”*

The removal of these current protections could prevent formerly incarcerated individuals from being denied an occupational license after the existing seven year waiting period. **We understand and appreciate that the bill sponsor seeks to *expand opportunities for people with criminal histories to access occupational licenses and certificates. This amendment would add the new process envisioned by HB 482 for those seeking a criminal record review prior to seven years while maintaining the existing provisions for people with certain criminal histories that are older than seven years.***

**HB 482 with amendments could reduce recidivism.** One of the primary causes of recidivism is a lack of resources, specifically education, employment, and housing.<sup>1</sup> HB 482 directly or indirectly affects all three of these resources. Obtaining a license or

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<sup>1</sup> *What is recidivism? And why is addressing it key to reducing crime?* (2022). Stand Together. <https://standtogether.org/stories/strong-safe-communities/what-is-recidivism-and-why-is-addressing-it-key-to-reducing-repeat-crime>

certification requires education and has the potential to enhance a person's employment and income. Enhanced employment and income increase a person's ability to secure adequate housing. HB 482 begins to address one of the potential roadblocks in this process.

**HB 482 seeks to address racial inequities in Maryland's judicial system.** The potential to combat racial inequity in Maryland's criminal justice, correctional, and rehabilitation systems is significant. Black Marylanders make up 29% of Maryland's population; however, they are 71% of the state's prison population, amounting to over 11,360 individuals.<sup>2</sup> Of the 3,095 inmates released in 2023, around 2,200 were Black.<sup>3</sup> This bill will enhance transparency and remove barriers related to criminal histories for obtaining occupational licenses and certifications. Improved transparency and awareness for corrective action will enable greater access to employment, potentially higher earnings, and self-empowerment, especially for Black individuals with criminal records.

**HB 482 as amended could create more needed employees for small businesses.**

Maryland requires licensure or certification in 167 out of 331 occupations.<sup>4</sup> The passage of House Bill 482 could positively impact small business employers within the state, as it would potentially increase the pool of eligible, licensed, or certified employees. One such field of employment is an HVAC technician. Currently, there is a shortage of HVAC technicians, and the field is expected to grow by 15% over the next decade.<sup>5</sup> By removing barriers to licensure or certification for individuals with criminal histories, small businesses may find it easier to fill positions requiring professional licensure or certification, enhancing their operations and contributing to Maryland's economy.

**HB 482 as amended could have substantial fiscal benefits to the state's revenues.**

From a budgetary perspective, the bill's potential economic benefits are considerable. It requires only 180 new individuals with criminal histories to acquire licenses or certifications annually, with a net Maryland income of \$47,000 each, to offset the additional expense to the state budget.<sup>6</sup> Calculations based on the percentage of civilians requiring a license or certification for employment and the state's prison population, Maryland could see a potential \$2 million increase in annual tax revenue due to higher incomes of people with criminal histories acquiring a license or certificate. Using the HVAC technician example, as of January 2025, the average salary for an HVAC technician in Maryland was \$66,481 per year or \$31.96 per hour.<sup>7</sup> Compared to

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<sup>2</sup> Racial Equity Impact Note. (2024). In *Maryland General Assembly*. <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2024RS-HB0175-REIN.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Racial Equity Impact Note. (2024). In *Maryland General Assembly*. <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2024RS-HB0175-REIN.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Timmons, E., Norris, C., & Trudeau, N. (2024). A Snapshot of Occupational Licensing in Maryland. In *West Virginia University*. <https://csorwvu.com/maryland-snapshot/>

<sup>5</sup> *Maryland HVAC Training*. (2025). HVAC School. <https://www.hvacschool.org/maryland/#:~:text=The%20demand%20for%20trained%20and,to%20the%20Baltimore%20Business%20Journal>.

<sup>6</sup> Fiscal and Policy Note: Third Reader - Revised. (2024). In *Maryland General Assembly*. [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/fnotes/bil\\_0005/hb0175.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/fnotes/bil_0005/hb0175.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *HVAC Technician: Average Salary in Maryland in 2025*. (2025). Talent. [https://www.talent.com/salary?job=hvac+technician&location=maryland#:~:text=\\$63%2C771,\\$68%2C806](https://www.talent.com/salary?job=hvac+technician&location=maryland#:~:text=$63%2C771,$68%2C806)



**Social Work Advocates  
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the average wage a person with a misdemeanor criminal history makes 22% less per year.<sup>8</sup>

HB 482 with amendments presents a balanced and fair approach to improving the occupational licensing and certification process for individuals with criminal histories. It enhances economic opportunities for a significant portion of Maryland's population and begins to address racial disparities within the state's criminal justice system. We urge you to support this bill for the betterment of our community, economy, and overall social equity.

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 482 with amendment.**

*Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.*

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<sup>8</sup>

*Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists.* (2018). The Clean Slate Initiative.  
<https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland#:~:text=People%20convicted%20of%20a%20felony,an%20average%20of%2022%20percent.>