

Senate Bill 797 Favorable
Fixing Maryland's Exoneree Compensation Law
Demetrius Smith, *Baltimore Exoneree*
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 26, 2020

My name is Demetrius Smith. When I was 24 years old I was wrongfully convicted of murdering a man named Robert Long in Baltimore. I was convicted because a jailhouse witness testified that he saw me commit the crime. He lied to avoid prison time in his own case.

The truth finally came out during a federal investigation of a man named Juan Morales. The investigation showed that Morales ordered a hitman to kill Robert Long because Long was going to testify against him. While I was sitting in prison, Morales committed more crimes. Eventually Morales and the hitman were convicted of killing Long and I was free.

Even though the real perpetrators have been convicted, I'm still not eligible for compensation. I wasn't exonerated through the writ of actual innocence so I'm out of luck. There are different ways that people can overturn their wrongful convictions. The men that actually killed Robert Long have been convicted—what stronger proof of my innocence could there be?

The worst part was that my daughter grew up without me. When I left she was a baby, when I came back she was grown. I had to get to know my child and rebuild our relationship.

It's been hard to restart my life without compensation. I started a landscaping business and I want to grow it. This bill would give me a fair shot at getting the compensation I deserve and I hope you will support it.