



The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 14, 2022

Senate Bill 554 – Maryland New Start Act of 2022 - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman and members of the committee,

VFC is a nonprofit organization that trains formerly incarcerated individuals to be auto mechanics. This is a field not only in desperate need of staffing but one in which opportunities exist for our graduates to launch their own automotive repair shop.

Our program is a four-month, paid internship that focuses on graduating quality auto mechanics. Many of our interns state that their ultimate goal is to own their own garage business. Unfortunately, VFC neither has the funding to train the individuals in entrepreneurship nor are we aware of a program that could provide such support.

The automotive field is one where an individual with a criminal record has the opportunity to earn a significant living and build a career. That is not the case for most any other field. Individuals with criminal backgrounds are forced to carry that designation with them their entire lives. Often, this forces them to return to their former lifestyle in order to survive. For many, their opportunity for a “second chance” is limited to being a business owner and yet there are limited resources for them to gain the skills necessary to succeed.

The passing of Senate Bill 554 would provide that opportunity, ultimately providing hope that an individual with a criminal background can earn a living, build wealth and be free from the life of crime. It is our experience, business owners with criminal backgrounds have a greater tendency to hire others with backgrounds.

The net result of passing Senate Bill 554 is: the creation of greater opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals; new job opportunities for others with backgrounds and ultimately reduced recidivism.

For that reason, Vehicles for Change strongly supports SB 554 and urges a favorable report.

Thank you

Martin Schwartz
President, Vehicles for Change