



February 15, 2022

Senator Obie Patterson
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Obie Patterson:

The AOBA Educational Foundation is pleased to support S.B. 554 the *Maryland New Start Act of 2022*. We also wanted to thank you for your leadership on the issue of economic opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals.

The AOBA Educational Foundation (AEF) works with the local real estate market to develop talented building engineering and maintenance professionals. AEF, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was created by members of the Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA) to address the talent crisis in the commercial real estate industry to focus on the critical need to raise awareness of the rewarding careers in building operations, engineering, and maintenance and build pipelines to these professions between employers and education and training providers.

Several industry stakeholders in the region are exploring the potential for the reentry population to serve as a talent pipeline for these hard to fill roles, thus creating a win-win-win scenario for formerly incarcerated individuals, our respective industries, and the communities where AOBA members live and work throughout the DMV. However, these efforts are still in the very early stages and will take time to bear fruit (if at all).

As efforts throughout our industry and countless others continue to work to address barriers to reentry, we are pleased to support the *New Start Act* and its focus on entrepreneurship and workforce readiness programming for this critical population. We also look forward to working with your office on efforts to promote workforce opportunities, particularly those in the skilled trades, for all Marylanders.

Thank you for your continued leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Wes Huffman
Executive Director, AOBA Educational Foundation