



PREPARED TESTIMONY  
**THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDING DISCRIMINATION RELATED TO  
HOUSING FOR RETURNING CITIZENS IN MARYLAND**

*Submitted by: Minister Thomas Anderson*  
*BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development)*

BUILD strongly supports the passage of SB 514, which would end discrimination in housing for most returning citizens in Maryland.

My name is Minister Thomas Anderson and I am a leader with BUILD (Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development) and a minister at Zion Baptist Church in Baltimore City. BUILD is a coalition of almost 50 religious congregations and non-profits in Baltimore City and County.

Over the last two years, BUILD and Turnaround Tuesday have listened to more than 700 returning citizens and others directly affected by the criminal justice system. This represents a small part of the hundreds of thousands of returning citizens who live throughout Maryland.

We asked each of them what was the biggest roadblock for them coming home from incarceration. We heard story after story, but the #1 issue by far was housing.

We heard about landlords refusing to rent because of criminal background. People wasting money on 5 or 6 applications just to be denied. People not getting a response. And people having to lie or have another person submit an application for them to get an apartment. People going into depression or having to stay in shelters or unsafe locations because they could not find housing.

But I want to share my own story with you today in person.

BUILD's sister organization in New Jersey helped pass the nation's first Fair Chance in Housing Law, working with the Fair Share Housing Center that you will hear from today. Let's make Maryland a leader yet again on issues of equality and justice, a place where we give people the second chances they need and deserve.

*BUILD's History and Track Record on this issue*

BUILD – Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development – is a broad-based, non-partisan coalition of more than 35 religious congregations, non-profits, and schools in Baltimore. Founded in 1977, BUILD has a long, productive track record acting on issues related to housing, jobs, schools, safety, and more. This has included the creation of the nation's first living wage ordinance in Baltimore City and working with the state legislature to invest \$1 billion in rebuilding Baltimore City's aging school infrastructure in recent years. We are part of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the nation's oldest and largest multi-faith organizing network in the United States.

In 2014, BUILD leaders in East Baltimore worked together to launch Turnaround Tuesday, a workforce development movement that connects returning citizens to living wage jobs through direct relationships with employers like Johns Hopkins, the University of Maryland, and more. To date, Turnaround Tuesday has

connected more than 2,000 people – mostly returning citizens – to living wage jobs at employers and anchor institutions across Baltimore. Of those, 71% stay for at least two years.

In 2024, BUILD and Turnaround Tuesday led the successful fight to end parole fees for returning citizens in Maryland. This bill was supported by a broad coalition of local and national allies. Following the bill's passage, Gov. Wes Moore announced that he would eliminate \$13 million in debt from parole fees that were past due.