



**PREPARED TESTIMONY
THE TIME IS NOW TO PASS A
FAIR CHANCE HOUSING BILL IN MARYLAND**

Submitted by: Shyheim Washington, Turnaround Tuesday

Turnaround Tuesday strongly supports the passage of SB 514. My name is Shyheim Washington, and I am a leader with Turnaround Tuesday.

Turnaround Tuesday (TAT) is a workforce development movement which supports returning citizens in Baltimore City by providing job placement, social skills training, wellness resources, and housing assistance. Since 2014, TAT has placed over 2,000 individuals in sustainable, living-wage jobs.

Over the past two years, TAT has worked with BUILD to engage more than 700 returning citizens and others impacted by the criminal justice system. Many arrive seeking employment but express deep frustration over housing denials despite securing jobs and meeting all other reintegration requirements.

This challenge reflects the broader struggles faced by returning citizens across Maryland, yet it remains a persistent reality for those TAT serves weekly.

While TAT successfully connects returning citizens to career opportunities, housing remains the primary barrier beyond employment. Many share feelings of defeat, questioning the value of working hard only to be denied stable housing. Some, despite securing good jobs, are forced into having to accept some of the worst housing due to these barriers, leaving them to wonder, “Am I not worthy of a second chance when I am doing everything right?”

But let me tell you my story.

Growing up in poverty on Baltimore’s west side, I lacked access to resources, which pushed me to the streets to support my 6 younger brothers. At 18 years old, I was convicted and sentenced to 10 years, serving 8 in prison. After my release, I committed to turning my life around, but the stigma of my criminal record made finding stable work difficult.

In 2023, I landed my first job since release through Turnaround Tuesday and started rebuilding my life. Despite improving my credit and finances, I faced repeated apartment denials. Discouraged, my girlfriend and I widened our search to Baltimore County and were approved for an overpriced apartment we couldn’t afford, but we had no other choice but to accept.

Almost two years later, I am now employed as the Community Engagement Specialist for Turnaround Tuesday and I work with BUILD to advocate for reforms in the criminal justice system. Now engaged and expecting my second child in June, I am preparing to move again. Despite my significant progress since my incarceration, I still harbor fear of being denied housing due to my criminal record.

By acting this year, Maryland has the opportunity to ensure justice-impacted people have real second chances to rebuild their lives. By removing barriers to housing we can create a path where returning citizens can contribute fully to their communities and thrive.