



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Prospective Tenant Criminal History Records Check (Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act)

TO: Senator Will Smith, Jr. Chair and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
FROM: Karen "Candy" Clark,  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland Criminal Justice Lead  
DATE: February 6, 2025

I am Candy Clark, the lead advocate with the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland, requesting your support for **SB 514 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Prospective Tenant Criminal History Records Check (Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act)**.

Citizens who are released from Maryland's prisons face a monumental task of integrating successfully back into their neighborhoods or other locations where they seek to live and thrive. Their problems or "collateral consequences" are staggering: food, food stamps, welfare support, health care, relationship difficulties, jobs, housing, and others. The majority of recidivists (70%) are repeat offenders who are trapped in this cycle. Many are excluded from public housing opportunities because of their incarceration record. In fact, formerly incarcerated people are nearly 10 times more likely to be homeless. **Senate Bill 514** goes to great efforts to give those with housing issues a path forward by addressing some of these obstacles to establish a more equitable, just, and stable process between the landlord and tenant.

To make certain that there is a clear understanding between the landlord and tenant, the landlord may employ a consumer reporting agency which will provide the landlord with any criminal history charges, or convictions (federal, state or local,) over the last 3 years. The reusable report contains the tenant's credit report, eviction history over the last 7 years, verification of employment, rental history and current income, and address or any other information that the landlord may legally use. If the landlord does conduct a Criminal History Check, it must be done on every prospective tenant, not just on selected people.

The landlord may not require a prospective tenant to take a drug or alcohol test, or request information on the possibility of drug or alcohol abuse from an established facility. The landlord may not reject the tenant based on a charge which had no conviction, an expunged conviction, or a Governor's full pardon, as well as, several other conditions that would nullify a rejection from rental.

This 10-page bill clarifies the contractual requirements between the tenant and landlord on many issues, such as what charges the tenant could be rejected for, like murder, sexual offences, and kidnapping, for example. It prohibits the landlord from publishing that "no one will be able to apply if they have been arrested or convicted of a crime," clearly giving applicants more equity in the housing opportunity. If the landlord decides not to offer the rental to a prospective tenant, the bill lists the requirements that the landlord must comply with for it to be acceptable. The process may also involve an Attorney General to oversee that it is handled properly.

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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry asks for your support on **SB 514**. A bill that will foster ethical treatment for those who may be more vulnerable to life's unpredictable events. Our faith calls us to employ justice, equity, and compassion in our interactions which this bill is.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen Clark*

UULM-MD Criminal Justice Lead Advocate

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