

Oral and Written Testimony for the House of Delegates Ways and Means Committee on

2/6/2025 at 1:00pm

HB 634 Maryland Fair Taxation for Justice-Involved Individuals Act

Favorable VOTE

To:

Chair

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbear

Vice Chair

Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins

One of the most glaring failures of justice reform is the systemic neglect of justice-involved professionals and business owners. These individuals—many of whom served short sentences for nonviolent offenses—return to society drowning in tax debt, professionally exiled, and financially ruined, with no clear path to recovery. Stripped of their livelihoods and abandoned by the very systems meant to support reentry, they face an unrelenting cycle of permanent punishment.

With no advocacy, no financial safety net, and no institutional support, they are left to navigate crushing tax burdens, revoked professional licenses, and the stigma of a criminal record alone. This isn't just an oversight—it's a deliberate economic and social exclusion that ensures even the most capable and determined individuals are denied the opportunity to rebuild.

Justice reform cannot be meaningful if it ignores those who once contributed to the economy but are now systematically locked out. It's time to break this cycle by implementing bold, equitable policy solutions that provide financial relief, professional reinstatement, and a genuine path forward for these individuals. True rehabilitation means removing the financial shackles of incarceration—not replacing them with insurmountable debt and economic isolation.

As an impacted professional and business owner with over 30 years of experience, who served three years in a prison camp and has spent nearly seven years post-release still battling tax-related challenges, I strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB 634. This legislation is long overdue and critically needed. ***My deepest appreciation to Delegate Wims and Delegate North for their leadership in addressing this pressing issue.***

Dr. Carmen Johnson

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