



April 2ND 2026

SB937

**Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Prospective Tenant Criminal History Records
Check (Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act)
Economic Matters Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 937**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 937 establishes clear and fair guidelines regarding the use of criminal history in the residential leasing process. It prohibits landlords from requesting or considering certain criminal history information at the initial stages of the application process, while still allowing for a balanced review later through a conditional offer framework. The bill also ensures that prospective tenants have the opportunity to provide context regarding their history and requires the development of standardized guidance and data collection to promote transparency and accountability.

This bill addresses a significant barrier to stable housing faced by individuals with past involvement in the justice system. Too often, individuals are denied housing opportunities based solely on their history, without consideration of rehabilitation, time passed, or personal circumstances. This bill creates a fairer process by delaying consideration of criminal history until later in the application process and encouraging a more individualized and thoughtful review. In doing so, it promotes second chances while still allowing landlords to make informed decisions.

This bill reflects the dignity of the human person, the importance of redemption, and the call to support those seeking a second chance. Every individual deserves the opportunity to rebuild their life and be treated with fairness and respect. Denying housing without consideration of personal growth undermines that dignity and limits the ability of individuals to fully reintegrate into society. This bill offers a balanced and compassionate approach that upholds justice while promoting mercy and restoration. The benefits of this legislation are substantial for individuals, families, and communities across Maryland. Access to stable housing is one of the most critical factors in successful reentry, reducing recidivism, and promoting long-term stability. When individuals are given a fair opportunity to secure housing, they are better positioned to maintain employment, support their families, and contribute positively to their communities. Families benefit from increased stability and reduced disruption, while

communities benefit from safer, more inclusive environments where individuals are supported in rebuilding their lives. This approach not only strengthens public safety but also reduces the social and economic costs associated with housing instability and repeated involvement in the justice system.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 937**.