

DATE: April 2, 2026

BILL NO: Senate Bill 937

TITLE: Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Prospective Tenant Criminal History Records Check (Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act)

COMMITTEE: House Economic Matters Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

Senate Bill 937 establishes standards on how landlords managing or owning five or more residential rental units may use criminal history information when evaluating prospective tenants. The bill prohibits landlords from requesting or considering most criminal history information before extending a conditional offer, with some exceptions with certain serious offenses (e.g., murder, sex offenses, child pornography, human trafficking, or drug related offenses in federally assisted housing). Following a conditional offer, landlords may consider only specified convictions and are required to conduct an individualized assessment that allows applicants to provide evidence of rehabilitation, inaccuracies, or other mitigating circumstances. Additionally, the bill restricts discriminatory advertising, increases transparency in the tenant screening process, and directs the Department of Housing and Community Development's Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs to develop guidance materials, collect data and enforce compliance.

Background and Analysis:

There has been a substantial amount of research demonstrating a strong correlation between access to stable housing and reduced crime rates. Individuals returning to communities after involvement with crime often face significant barriers to securing housing, which can increase housing instability and negatively affect successful reentry outcomes. Since individuals with criminal records are subjected to screening barriers, these housing barriers contribute to unequal access to stable housing opportunities. Furthermore in 2020, the [Marshall Project](#) found that formerly incarcerated individuals identified affordable housing and living wages as the primary factor that would prevent their return to prison. The cycle of housing uncertainty continues to create ongoing vulnerability for these communities.

SB 937 seeks to reduce these unnecessary housing barriers while maintaining landlord discretion through assessments. The bill ensures that most criminal history information can only be reviewed after a conditional offer, requires fair assessments that let applicants provide evidence of rehabilitation or other mitigating factors, and promotes transparent and consistent screening practices. By supporting these standards, the bill helps improve housing stability and reduce homelessness across Maryland.

DHCD Position

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 937.