

SHANEKA HENSON
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 203
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3578
800-492-7122 Ext. 3578
Shaneka.Henson@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

April 2, 2026
SPONSOR TESTIMONY
Senate Bill 0937
Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian and Economic Matter Committee Members

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Henson representing District 30 in Anne Arundel County. Thank you for the opportunity to present the amended **Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act** and respectfully request that you give a favorable vote to SB 937.

The Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act advances this state's core priorities: clear legal standards, real procedural fairness, predictable enforcement, and balanced liability protections.

SB 937 replaces inconsistent screening practices with firm statutory rules governing when and how criminal history may be considered. By defining key terms and specifying exactly which convictions may be reviewed—and at what stage—the bill provides the clarity courts, regulators, landlords, and applicants need. This reduces ambiguity, limits ad hoc decision-making, and strengthens Maryland's legal framework.

The legislation builds due process protections directly into leasing. If a landlord withdraws a conditional offer, they must give written notice explaining the reason and informing the applicant of their right to seek reassessment and review the underlying information. Applicants are further guaranteed the ability to correct inaccuracies, present evidence of rehabilitation, and provide mitigating information—protections that align squarely with this Committee's commitment to transparency and the right to be heard.

SB 937 prohibits blanket bans and instead requires individualized assessments grounded in objective factors: the nature of the offense, time elapsed, rehabilitation, and safety considerations. This approach reduces arbitrary or discriminatory outcomes and aligns housing decisions with long-standing constitutional and civil-rights principles.

Landlord discretion and background checks are preserved. It allows adverse action only for a narrow set of serious offenses and only when necessary to serve a substantial, legitimate, and nondiscriminatory interest. This balance protects public safety and property rights while curbing overly broad exclusions that are increasingly indefensible under modern law.

Enforcement through the Maryland Consumer Protection Act provides a strong, familiar framework. Violations are treated as unfair or deceptive trade practices, supported by clear penalties and rulemaking authority for the Attorney General. Required data collection and annual reporting strengthen oversight while protecting landlords acting in good faith—promoting compliance without inviting excessive litigation.

Finally, the bill shields landlords from hindsight-based liability by clarifying that renting to someone with a criminal history—or choosing not to conduct a background check—cannot itself be grounds for a claim.

In conclusion, by establishing clear standards, securing procedural rights, and preserving legitimate safety interests, SB 937 strengthens Maryland's housing law and reduces legal uncertainty. I respectfully urge a favorable vote of the committee.