



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 557

**Occupational Licensing and Certification - Criminal History - Predetermination Review
Process**

TO: Hon. Kriselda Valderrama, Chair, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: The REFORM Alliance

DATE: February 18th, 2026

REFORM Alliance is a national organization dedicated to transforming probation and parole systems across the United States by advancing evidence-based supervision policies that reduce recidivism, promote rehabilitation, and protect public safety.

As part of REFORM's commitment to improving supervision systems, we recognize the critical role that meaningful employment plays in reducing recidivism and promoting long-term prosperity. Research consistently shows that stable employment is one of the strongest predictors of successful reentry. When individuals returning from the justice system have access to legitimate career pathways, they are far more likely to remain crime-free, support their families, and contribute positively to their communities. Recognizing this clear connection, REFORM stands firmly in support of HB 557.

Maryland has made significant strides to ensure that its workforce system does not needlessly exclude individuals with criminal records. HB 557 builds on this progress by establishing a binding predetermination process that allows justice-impacted individuals to determine their eligibility for occupational licensure before investing significant time and financial resources in training and education. By providing clarity up front, the bill ensures that individuals can make informed decisions before enrolling in programs, pursuing professional certifications, or making a significant financial investment. A corollary impact of the bill is that it would expand access to employment opportunities for qualified Marylanders, providing immediate benefits to families and communities while strengthening the reentry landscape for justice-impacted individuals, specifically those on supervision.

Employment is not just about income; it is about stability, dignity, and accountability. By supporting this bill, Maryland can continue to lead the way in smart, evidence-based workforce and public safety policy. We respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 557.

Thank you for your time and consideration.