



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 539**

Department of Social and Economic Mobility – Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund

TO: Hon. Pamela Beidle, Chair, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: REFORM Alliance

DATE: March 11th, 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.

Understanding this clear connection, REFORM stands in firm support of Senate Bill 539. We thank the sponsor for amending the bill to provide explicit support for Marylanders returning from incarceration. We know that this population is among the highest needs for additional workforce supports. Nationally, nearly two-thirds of people under probation earn less than \$20,000 per year, and research consistently shows that stable employment is one of the strongest predictors of reduced recidivism.

Maryland has made significant strides to ensure that its workforce system does not needlessly exclude individuals with criminal records. Senate Bill 539 builds on this progress by creating a fund to support job fairs and workforce grants to Local Workforce Boards and nonprofits that can help returning citizens find meaningful employment. By providing this funding, the bill dedicates meaningful additional resources to helping returning citizens reenter the workforce. Expanding access to employment opportunities for qualified Marylanders would provide immediate benefit to families and communities while also strengthening the reentry landscape for justice-impacted individuals, and specifically those on supervision.

Employment is not just about income; it is about stability, dignity, and accountability. By supporting this bill, Maryland can continue leading the way in smart, evidence-driven workforce

and public safety policy. REFORM Alliance respectfully urges a favorable report with the House Sponsor Amendments on Senate Bill 539.

Thank you for your time and consideration.