



OUT FOR JUSTICE

MEMBER NAME Oral Testimony - HB1070:

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

DATE: February 26th, 2026

TO: Government, Labor & Elections Committee

FROM: Out For Justice Inc.

Good afternoon Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the Committee,

Out for Justice is a grassroots nonprofit formed by formerly incarcerated individuals that organizes justice-impacted people to reform harmful criminal legal policies and remove barriers to successful reentry. **We submit this written testimony in strong support of House Bill 1070 (HB1070) - Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund.**

HB1070 establishes the Workforce Opportunities Grant Fund within the Department of Social and Economic Mobility, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, to support workforce events and job fairs for individuals returning home from incarceration, college students, apprentices, and people living in areas with high unemployment. At its core, this bill is about creating real access to opportunity for people who are often locked out of the job market.

In Maryland, about 1.7 million people have a criminal record.¹ Each year, thousands return home from prison and are expected to rebuild their lives, yet most employers run background checks and many automatically screen out applicants with convictions. A record can cut job offers in half. **For our members, that means sending out application after application and hearing nothing back. It means wanting to work but not being given the chance.**

We know that employment is one of the strongest predictors of successful reentry. When people secure stable work, they are far less likely to return to the system. But when they cannot find work, the risk of recidivism increases and families and communities pay the price. **By investing in targeted workforce opportunities, the Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund tackles one of the root causes of instability after incarceration.**

¹ Greenspan, Owen, and Dennis A. DeBacco. "Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2012." Bureau of Justice Statistics, United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, Jan. 2014, bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/survey-state-criminal-history-information-systems-2012. Accessed 24 Feb. 2026.



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If enacted, this bill would open doors for justice impacted Marylanders who are ready and willing to work. It would help connect people to employers, reduce unemployment among returning citizens, and strengthen local economies. **In practical terms, that means more parents able to support their children, more people meeting supervision requirements, and fewer individuals cycling back into the criminal legal system.**

Some may argue that workforce initiatives alone cannot resolve structural unemployment or that targeted job fairs may not reach those most in need. **However, HB1070 is narrowly designed to prioritize individuals returning from incarceration and those living in areas with high unemployment.** It complements existing workforce efforts while correcting a longstanding access gap for justice impacted Marylanders. **The concern is overstated and does not outweigh the measurable benefits of expanding employment pathways.**

Work is about more than a paycheck. It is about dignity, stability, and having a real stake in your community. HB1070 moves Maryland in the right direction by expanding opportunity and supporting safer communities.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB1070 – Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Workforce Opportunities Grant Program and Fund.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

On behalf of Out for Justice,
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Leadership Development Coordinator

For any questions or concerns, please email advocacy@out4justice.org.