



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1070**

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

TO: Hon. Melissa Wells, Chair, and Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

FROM: REFORM Alliance

DATE: February 26th, 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 House Bill 1070 as amended, and we thank Delegate Stephanie Smith for sponsoring.

A criminal record can be both the cause and consequence of poverty and has detrimental effects on the employment prospects for the estimated [1.7 million Marylanders with a criminal history](#) (pg.26). Every year, approximately 15,000 Marylanders are released from state prisons and struggle to secure a job, find a place to live, and reenter society. Demographically, [71% of Maryland's prison population is black](#) (pg.20), the highest in the nation, and one out of three Marylanders returning from incarceration returns to Baltimore City. This leads to a disproportionate amount of Black Marylanders without access to employment, rendering them unable to build wealth, provide for their families, or properly participate in the economy. The Department of Justice has found high rates of recidivism among returning citizens, with half of all returning citizens recidivating within three years and 60 percent recidivating within five years. One of the primary drivers of high recidivism rates is the inability of returning citizens to find a job: [over 60 percent of formerly incarcerated persons remain unemployed](#) one year after their release. This is mainly because more than 85% of employers conduct background checks on all job applicants and deny employment to many returning citizens based on their records. A past criminal conviction of any sort reduces job offers by half. This leaves many of the 1.7 million Marylanders with criminal records out in the cold when seeking gainful employment. A 2015 Manhattan Institute study [revealed](#) that employment, especially within the first six months of release, drastically lowers the likelihood of recidivism for nonviolent offenders (pg.3).

To combat this, House Bill 1070, as amended, establishes the Workforce Opportunities Grant Fund, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, to create targeted workforce events and job fairs for individuals returning home from incarceration, college students, apprentices, and those living in areas with high unemployment. Thus, prioritizing those who need access to opportunities the most. A corollary impact of the bill is that it would expand employment opportunities for qualified Marylanders, providing immediate benefits to families and communities while strengthening the reentry landscape for justice-impacted individuals, including those on community supervision, who are most at risk of recidivating.

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 House Bill 1070 as amended.

**The Undersigned Organizations Also Support House Bill 1070 as amended:**

1. Out for Justice
2. Life After Release
3. Center for Urban Families