



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0937:

Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act

March 11, 2026

From: Treveric Speaks
To: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Terry Speaks, and I serve as a Leadership Development Organizer with Out For Justice. At Out For Justice, Inc. (OFJ), we work with families navigating complex systems every day, a grassroots organization whose mission is to engage, educate, and empower individuals impacted by the legal system.

I am in strong support of SB 937, the Fair Chance Housing Act, which would provide access to housing, a basic need for all humans, despite the mistakes or past records. My support for this bill is not just as an advocate, but as someone who has lived this reality.

I spent ten years of my life incarcerated. During that time, I worked on myself. I prepared for reentry. I made a commitment that when I came home, I would live differently and contribute positively to my community. And I have done exactly that. I am employed, earn enough income to afford housing, and my credit meets the standards required for an apartment. Yet the hardest barrier I continue to face is housing.

I have completed applications, paid non-refundable fees, and met every financial qualification; only to be denied because of my record. Not because I cannot pay. Not because I am irresponsible. Not because I am unqualified. But simply because of a past conviction.

That rejection sends a message that no matter how much you grow, no matter how hard you work, no matter how much you contribute, you will never be fully accepted. Housing is not a luxury, it is a human right. It is stability. It is dignity. It is the foundation that allows someone to maintain employment, reconnect with family, and truly reintegrate into society.

Senate Bill 937 would create a fairer process. It would prevent landlords from asking about criminal history at the beginning of the application process and require them to first evaluate whether someone qualifies as a tenant. Only after a conditional offer could a limited set of serious convictions be considered, and even then landlords must conduct an individualized assessment that allows the applicant to present evidence of rehabilitation and mitigating circumstances.



This approach recognizes that people are more than the worst moment of their lives. It ensures that someone who has worked to rebuild their life has a real chance to secure stable housing, while still allowing landlords to consider serious safety concerns.

Stable housing is one of the most important factors in successful reentry. When people have a safe place to live, they are more likely to maintain employment, support their families, and contribute to their communities. When housing is denied, the risk of instability and recidivism increases, not because people want to fail, but because the system leaves them with fewer options.

This bill gives people like me a fair chance to move forward.

For these reasons, Out For Justice respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 937.

Respectfully,
Terry Speaks, He/him
Leadership Development Organizer
Out For Justice Inc.