

**SB937 - Landlord and Tenant –
Residential Leases - Prospective Tenant Criminal History
Records Check (Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act)**

**HEARING BEFORE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
3/11/26**

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Shore Legal Access respectfully requests your favorable report for SB937, the Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act. This legislation takes a significant and long-overdue step toward ensuring that Marylanders with criminal records are not categorically locked out of safe, stable housing. By establishing clear rules and safeguards around the use of criminal history in residential leasing decisions, SB937 advances fairness, public safety, and the dignity of all Maryland residents.

Shore Legal Access (SLA) connects people on the Eastern Shore with limited financial means to legal representation and essential community resources. Each year, SLA helps over 3,000 people in our community access the legal system when they would otherwise be shut out. Our small legal team and network of volunteer lawyers provide free legal services for eviction prevention, criminal record expungement, life and estate planning, family law, foreclosure, and consumer debt. These services help families gain financial and housing stability and give people hope and agency over their future.

We know from working extensively with Eastern Shore residents on housing and criminal record expungement that past criminal records are a substantial barrier. Some landlords have blanket company rental policies that prevent someone with any past criminal record from even being considered. Prospective tenants with criminal records tell us that they are asked to pay higher deposits and are scrutinized more rigorously than others. Many of our expungement clients are homeless because they are unable to secure housing due to their past record. Justice system involved people are ten times more likely to be homeless than the general public.

This bill establishes clear procedural safeguards and a process to allow landlords to conduct an individualized assessment of prospective tenants and gives tenants a fair opportunity to request reconsideration. When people have a fair chance at housing, community safety improves, families gain economic stability, and people who are working hard to repair their lives can move forward. That means better lives for families, more tax revenue, and stronger communities. We ask for your favorable report for SB937 to help Maryland families move forward now. For more information about our position, please feel free to reach out to Meredith Girard, Esq., Executive Director, at: mgirard@shorelegal.org, 410-690-8128.



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