

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

My name is Linda Girdner and I live in Gambrills, MD. I urge you to **support SB0937** Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Prospective Tenant Criminal History Records Check (**Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act**). This bill prohibits a landlord from requiring or requesting from a prospective tenant certain information relating to criminal history and prohibiting a landlord from considering certain information when evaluating the prospective tenant.

Housing access is one of the most significant challenges facing individuals returning to the community after incarceration. A stable living situation is essential for successful reentry, yet returning citizens face numerous legal and practical barriers to securing housing.

This bill, if enacted, would help make it harder for landlords to discriminate by:

- Precluding a landlord from requiring a prospective tenant to take a drug test or disclose any criminal history on a lease application, except if they are a sex offender or have committed other major crimes, such as first-degree murder or sex trafficking
- Precluding a landlord from publishing any statement that would reasonably discourage a tenant with criminal history to apply for a lease
- Ensuring that the landlord provide a prospective tenant with a physical document stating any reason that they would have been denied a lease

As Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative has said: "Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." After a person has paid their dues to society that person's rental application, with a few exceptions, they should not be considered any differently than another's by the landlord in the initial stages.

I support "Ban the Box" for Housing, meaning that it would delay criminal history inquiries until later in the application process, require individualized assessments, and limit the lookback period for criminal records

These are reasonable measures that will help those persons who are trying to restart their lives get housing. Therefore, I urge you to **vote favorable on SB0937 – Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Linda Girdner