

HB557 Licensing Predetermination Review Process-Wr

Uploaded by: Andrew Fulginiti

Position: FAV

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TESTIMONY ON HB557

TO: Chair Smith, Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Andrew Fulginiti , Legislative Director
DATE: March 25, 2026
BILL: HB557 Licensing Predetermination Review Process

MDL POSITION: SUPPORT

House Bill 557 aims to reduce unnecessary barriers to occupational and professional licensure for individuals with prior involvement in the justice system. It seeks to establish a fair, transparent, and consistent process by clearly defining eligibility requirements and outlining any exclusionary factors. Through this framework, the bill would promote equitable access to professional opportunities while maintaining the standards necessary for public protection.

Many Marylanders with a criminal history often assume they are automatically disqualified from obtaining a license. Implementing a predetermination process would help dispel this misconception by providing clarity and transparency regarding their eligibility. This would encourage more qualified candidates to pursue training and employment in licensed occupations who might have otherwise excluded themselves. Further, the predetermination process saves prospective licensees time and money by ensuring that they will not go through the process of completing training, classes, and other licensure requirements just to be denied at the end of the process because of their criminal record.

By enacting this legislation, Maryland would expand its pool of skilled professionals, strengthen its workforce, and create new pathways for economic mobility, all while upholding the public's trust and safety.

The Department respectfully requests a favorable report on HB557.

For questions, please contact Andrew Fulginiti at **Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov**.

HB0557_FAV_REFORM_Crossover.PDF

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 557

**Occupational Licensing and Certification - Criminal History - Predetermination Review
Process**

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: REFORM Alliance

DATE: March 25th, 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 557.

Maryland has made significant strides to ensure that its workforce system does not needlessly exclude individuals with criminal records. House Bill 557 builds on this progress by establishing a binding predetermination process that allows justice-impacted individuals to determine their eligibility for occupational licensure before investing significant time and financial resources in training and education. By providing clarity up front, the bill ensures that individuals can make informed decisions before enrolling in programs, pursuing professional certifications, or making a significant financial investment. A corollary impact of the bill is that it would expand access to employment opportunities for qualified Marylanders, providing immediate benefits to families and communities while strengthening the reentry landscape for justice-impacted individuals, specifically those on supervision.

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 557.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB 557_Del Harrison_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Andrea Harrison

Position: FWA

ANDREA FLETCHER HARRISON
Legislative District 24
Prince George's County

Appropriations Committee
Vice Chair, Racing and Sports
Facilities Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3919
800-492-7122 Ext. 3919
AndreaFletcher.Harrison@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Written Testimony – HB 557 – Occupational Licensing and Certification – Criminal
History – Predetermination Review Process**

March 25, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

For the record, I am Delegate Andrea Fletcher Harrison, and I am here today to introduce HB 557. I have brought forth this legislation to reduce barriers to re-entry for people who have been formerly incarcerated by strengthening and standardizing Maryland's predetermination review process for occupational licensing and certification. It is important to me that people have second chances to lower the likelihood of recidivism, encourage successful re-entry to society and our communities, and help support Maryland businesses that rely on a stable, qualified workforce.

HB 557 updates Criminal Procedure § 1-209 to formally establish a clear, binding predetermination review process within the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Environment, the Maryland Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, and the Maryland Department of Labor. Under the bill, an individual may request that the relevant department review their criminal history in advance to determine whether it would disqualify them from obtaining the occupational license or certificate they seek. The department's decision on that request is binding unless there is a subsequent direct and material adverse change to the individual's criminal history, giving applicants certainty before they invest time and money into training and education.

This bill requires departments to use existing resources to conduct these reviews and, when a license or certificate would be denied, to provide an explanation that includes the basis for the denial under § 1-209, such as a direct relationship between the offense and the license or an unreasonable risk to public safety. HB 557 also preserves important public-safety sideboards by maintaining the exclusion for crimes of violence and by specifying that the section does not apply to individuals seeking licensure or renewal under Title 11, Subtitle 6 of the Financial Institutions Article. In addition, the bill clarifies that the new predetermination process does not apply to health occupations boards regulated under Titles 1 through 21 of the Health Occupations Article, thereby respecting existing professional regulatory frameworks.

HB 557 allows individuals to submit a revised request for predetermination either one year after the prior decision or when there is a material change to their criminal history, such as completion of supervision or additional evidence of rehabilitation. The bill also authorizes departments to charge a modest criminal history review fee of up to 100 dollars, with a required waiver for individuals whose income is at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, as determined by the District Court of Maryland. This structure ensures that agencies can manage workload while keeping the process accessible for low-income Marylanders who are often the most affected by collateral consequences.

Maryland law already recognizes that it is the policy of the State to encourage the employment of nonviolent ex-offenders and to remove unnecessary barriers to their ability to demonstrate fitness for occupational licenses or certifications. Current data show that previously incarcerated people face unemployment rates many times higher than the general population, and those barriers are especially acute during the first few years after release, when stable employment is critical to successful re-entry and public safety. With approximately 19 percent of Maryland jobs requiring a license or certificate, ensuring a fair and transparent path to licensure can unlock economic opportunity, strengthen families, and reduce recidivism.

The predetermination process created and clarified in HB 557 is about honest and individualized review of criminal records before returning citizens invest their valuable time and money into a desired profession. It asks departments to look at the nature of the offense, the time elapsed, the applicant's rehabilitation and good conduct, and the actual duties of the license, instead of treating any record as an automatic disqualification. This approach aligns with what employers and workers across the country are already saying: when safety can be protected, they are willing to hire and work alongside people who have been formerly incarcerated.

Everyone has a past, and it is our responsibility as lawmakers to ensure that the past does not permanently define anyone's future when they have demonstrated rehabilitation and a desire to contribute. HB 557 gives Marylanders with records a fair chance to understand whether licensure is possible before they invest in training, while preserving appropriate safeguards for public safety and existing regulatory structures. Together, we can continue to improve outcomes for returning citizens, Maryland businesses, and the communities that depend on both.

I am offering an amendment which states that this subsection does not apply to an individual applying for a license or the renewal of a license under the Health Occupations article.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendment on HB 557.

HB 557 - JPR - MBON and various boards - LOSWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Maryland State of

Position: FWA



Board of Nursing

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 25, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: HB 557 – Occupational Licensing and Certification - Criminal History -
Predetermination Review Process – Support with Amendments**

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Boards of Nursing, Acupuncture, Dental, Morticians and Funeral Directors, Physical Therapy, Podiatry, Professional Counselors and Therapists, Psychology, and Social Work (the “Boards”) respectfully submit this letter of support with amendments for HB 557 – Occupational Licensing and Certification - Criminal History - Predetermination Review Process.

This bill establishes a predetermination review process for occupational licenses and certificates in certain departments of State government and authorizes a department to charge a criminal history review fee of not more than \$100 or to waive the fee under certain circumstances.

While the intent of HB 557 to increase transparency and reduce barriers to licensure is commendable, the Boards are concerned that, as drafted, the bill may unintentionally limit its ability to fully evaluate applicants and could create additional barriers for individuals with criminal history seeking licensure.

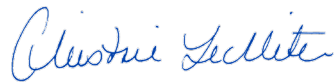
Under current law, applicants seeking licensure or certification from the Boards must complete a criminal history records check (CHRC) and disclose prior criminal history. The Boards conduct a comprehensive, individualized review of each case, applying the factors outlined in §1-209 of the Criminal Procedure Article. Importantly, denial of licensure based solely on criminal history is rare. The Boards’ current processes are designed to ensure that prior criminal history does not automatically disqualify an applicant, while still upholding its mandate to protect public health and safety.

The Boards’ ability to conduct a holistic review of each applicant remains essential. The proposed predetermination process, while well-intentioned, may lead to unintended consequences. Without access to a full application and complete context—including education, work history, rehabilitation efforts, and mitigating factors—the Boards may be compelled, out of caution, to issue preliminary denials in cases that might otherwise result in approval following a full review. This could necessitate additional reconsideration or appeal processes, increasing administrative burdens on both the Boards and applicants, and potentially discouraging individuals from pursuing licensure.

The Boards, in collaboration with other Health Occupations Boards, have worked with the bill sponsor to develop amendment language to **exclude Health Occupations boards** from the predetermination requirements. Accordingly, the Boards respectfully request a favorable report with amendments on HB 557.

Thank you again for your time. For more information, please contact Ms. Mitzi Fishman, Director of Legislative Affairs, at 410-585-2049 or mitzi.fishman@maryland.gov, or Ms. Rhonda Scott, Executive Director, at 410-585-1953 or rhonda.scott2@maryland.gov; or the Legislative Liaison for the Boards, Lillian Reese at 410-794-4757 or lillian.reese@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine Lechliter". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Christine Lechliter
Board President

The opinion of the Boards expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.



HB0557/953324/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

17 FEB 26
16:24:40

BY: Delegate Harrison
(To be offered in the Economic Matters Committee)

AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 557
(First Reading File Bill)

On page 3, in line 14, after “**(1)**” insert “**THIS SUBSECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO AN INDIVIDUAL APPLYING FOR A LICENSE OR THE RENEWAL OF A LICENSE UNDER THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE.**”

(2)”;

in lines 27 and 32, strike “**(2)**” and “**(3)**”, respectively, and substitute “**(3)**” and “**(4)**”, respectively; and in lines 29 and 34, in each instance, strike “**(1)**” and substitute “**(2)**”.

On page 4, in line 2, strike “**(1)**” and substitute “**(2)**”; and in line 5, strike “**(4)**” and substitute “**(5)**”.

HB 557 - Judicial Proceedings- MBON and various bo

Uploaded by: Rhonda Scott

Position: FWA



Board of Nursing

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 25, 2026

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Christine Lechliter
Board President

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HB0557/953324/1

AMENDMENTS PREPARED BY THE DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES 17 FEB 26 16:24:40

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(To be offered in the Economic Matters Committee)

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Uploaded by: Joana da Silva-Gonzalez

Position: INFO

Maryland Assembly Judicial Proceedings Committee

Written Testimony: Dr. Darwyn Deyo, PhD

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Assembly Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Dr. Darwyn Deyo. I am an associate professor of economics at San José State University. I am also the director of regulatory frontiers research with the Knee Regulatory Research Center at West Virginia University, where I research labor markets. My recent research focuses on the effects of licensing reforms for people with criminal records. I am writing today about the benefits to Marylanders from criminal records reforms for occupational licensing in HB 557. The main takeaways from my testimony are:

- HB 557 builds on Maryland's previous criminal records reforms for occupational licensing.
- My research finds that criminal records reforms increase employment and reduce crime.
- HB 557 could reduce uncertainty around licensing eligibility for both applicants and regulators.

Criminal records reforms open doors and make communities safer

My research finds that criminal records reforms for licensed occupations increases employment and reduces crime, especially property crime.¹ Inversely, other research has found that higher licensing barriers are associated with higher recidivism as aspiring workers are prevented from working in major labor markets.² Instead of banning people from skilled work opportunities, licensing reforms for people with criminal records can create sensible regulations for applicants and regulators. When more qualified individuals are able to work in licensed occupations, their communities benefit from both improved employment and safety.

Occupational licensing raises barriers to opportunity and employment

Maryland licenses dozens of occupations studied in the most recent License to Work report, which I co-authored.³ People who want to work in these occupations may be deterred from completing years-long training and education requirements because they are unsure if their criminal record bars them from attaining the requisite license. In this way, collateral consequences exacerbate economic inequities by making people pay twice for the same offense. With over 1 in 5 Maryland workers needing a license to work, the potential impact of reforms is positive and large.

HB 557 would expand economic opportunity in Maryland by reducing systematic barriers

Maryland has made significant criminal records reforms for licensing since 2009, and HB 557 builds on that record. Allowing aspiring workers to get confirmation of their eligibility before they invest years into training and education for a licensed occupation would support job

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165176524005792>

² <https://cseel.asu.edu/research/publications/TurningShacklesintoBootstraps>

³ <https://ij.org/report/license-to-work-3/>

attainment and streamline the review process for departments. In addition to preventing departments from denying licenses based only on past non-violent convictions, Maryland could also explicitly prevent the use of so-called “good moral character” requirements by licensing boards and ban consideration of arrest records that did not lead to a conviction. Nineteen and twenty states have passed these reforms, respectively. HB 557 thus has the potential to significantly improve economic opportunity in Maryland while clarifying the process for aspiring workers and regulators.

Darwyn Deyo, PhD

Associate Professor of Economics, San José State University

Director of Regulatory Frontiers, Kree Regulatory Research Center