



WRITTEN TESTIMONY
THE IMPORTANCE OF
PASSING THE MARYLAND CLEAN SLATE ACT
HB 360 / SB 483

Submitted by: Shyheim Washington
BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development)

BUILD strongly supports passage of the Maryland Clean Slate Act in the 2026 legislative session.

My name is Shyheim Washington and I am a leader with BUILD (Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development, a non-partisan coalition of more than 50 congregations and non-profits) and with Turnaround Tuesday (a jobs development movement that came out of BUILD and has connected more than 2,600 people to living wage jobs).

Over the last three years, BUILD and Turnaround Tuesday have listened to more than 1,000 returning citizens and others directly affected by the criminal justice system. This represents a small part of the more than one million people with a record who live throughout Maryland – including more than a hundred thousand in Baltimore City.

We asked these 1,000 people about the biggest roadblocks they had coming home from incarceration. Again and again, we heard about the broken and convoluted expungement system here in Maryland. To many – including myself – it seems like a system that is designed to stop people from applying.

I know the importance of this kind of bill first hand. As a returning citizen, I have seen again and again what having a record can do to your ability to find a job, to find housing, and to find opportunity. If it had not been for Turnaround Tuesday and their work partnering with different employers, my path would have been very different. But – because of Turnaround Tuesday – I have been able to provide for my growing family and will soon be transitioning to work as an organizer with BUILD.

But this bill is not about me. As an employee now with Turnaround Tuesday, I hear every day about how difficult it is for people who have a record across the Baltimore region. In particular, I hear about different ways the expungement process has failed people. The rules are confusing. There's very little support. And it takes forever.

That's why the Clean Slate bill that we are talking about today is so important. This bill would seal the entire record for more than 400,000 Marylanders. Hundreds of thousands more would have their record partially sealed. That's incredible!

Think about how many Marylanders – people who live in every district in the state – would be more able to find jobs, find housing, and contribute to our state's economy. But more than that,

the more doors we open to people, the more just and safer Maryland will become. I urge you to vote favorable.

BUILD's History and Track Record on this issue

BUILD – Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development – is a broad-based, non-partisan coalition of 50 religious congregations, non-profits, and schools in Baltimore. Founded in 1977, BUILD has a long, productive track record acting on issues related to housing, jobs, schools, safety, and more. This has included the creation of the nation's first living wage ordinance in Baltimore City and working with the state legislature to invest \$1 billion in rebuilding Baltimore City's aging school infrastructure in recent years. We are part of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the nation's oldest and largest multi-faith organizing network in the United States.

In 2014, BUILD leaders in East Baltimore worked together to launch Turnaround Tuesday, a workforce development movement that connects returning citizens to living wage jobs through direct relationships with employers like Johns Hopkins, the University of Maryland, and more. To date, Turnaround Tuesday has connected more than 2,000 people – mostly returning citizens – to living wage jobs at employers and anchor institutions across Baltimore. Of those, 71% stay for at least two years.

In 2024, BUILD and Turnaround Tuesday led the successful fight to end parole fees for returning citizens in Maryland. This bill was supported by a broad coalition of local and national allies. Following the bill's passage, Gov. Wes Moore announced that he would eliminate \$13 million in debt from parole fees that were past due.

During the 2026 legislative session, we gathered nearly 300 people – mostly people with a record – here in Annapolis to express support for two bills: Clean Slate and Fair Chance Housing.