

Honorary Chairs

Robert Ehrlich
Former Governor

Stuart O. Simms
Former Secretary DPSCS

Executive Committee

Diamonte Brown
BCPS teacher

Philip Caroom
Retired Judge

Charles Chappell
Former inmate; former
Manager for Correctional
Enterprises at JCI

Candy Clark
Unitarian Universalist

Vince Greco
Maryland C.U.R.E.
Out for Justice
JCI Prison Scholars Program
Extra-Legalese Group, Inc.

Lea Green
Maryland C.U.R.E.

Jerry McLaurin
People for Change Coalition

Bob Rhudy
Past Director of Mediation,
Court of Special Appeals

Jim Rose
Patapsco Friends

Glennor Shirley
Retired Director of DPSCS
Library Services

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



TO: Chair Dereck Davis & House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Phil Caroom, MAJR Executive Committee

DATE: January 22, 2019

HB 22 offers sorely-needed relief for all-too-common problems today facing ex-offenders seeking honest employment involving an occupational license or certificate: regardless of the number of years an offender has spent in law-abiding, sober behavior, demonstrating his or her rehabilitation, there is no practical mechanism to provide a second chance for good employment of someone whose youthful mistake involved a single violent incident, a single drug-influenced sex offense, or one of many other felonies. Yet, good employment is perhaps the strongest single factor shown by evidence-based studies to prevent new offenses.

Both federal and state studies clearly show that ex-offenders who are employed are much less likely to commit new offenses than those who are unemployed. A 2017 Greater Baltimore Committee report summarizes this research, stating:

the single largest determinant of re-arrest and re-conviction is whether or not a person is able to find a job upon release from prison. The probability of re-conviction for someone who is employed within two months of release and earning \$10 or more per hour is only 8 percent, one-third of the probability of an unemployed ex-offender.

There is minimal cost required by **HB 22**, according to the fiscal policy analysis. But, even that minimal cost & inconvenience should be weighed against the great benefits promised by the bill. Without employment, the ex-offender is approximately twice as likely to return to prison, costing taxpayers \$38,000 per year on average—much more than **HB 22**'s projected costs.

In addition to this cost of incarceration, Maryland should consider the impact on possible victims and on children and communities of the ex-offenders. According to a 2015 Huffington Post report, studies indicate that

Children of felons are seven times more likely to be incarcerated themselves. They are more likely (23 percent vs. 4 percent) to be expelled or suspended from school than other children.

A victim's representative may offer an emotional appeal in opposition to **HB 22**, suggesting that it could permit a chronic offender the chance to endanger public safety. But the bill provides two safeguards: 1) 7 years of proven good behavior and 2) the agency's wide discretion to evaluate carefully the applicant's fitness and the license's responsibilities.

For all these reasons, HB 22's second-chance for honest, licensed employment should be seen as an important measure to support reduce taxpayer costs, as well as to promote family stability, public safety and crime-prevention. Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) strongly supports **HB 22**; we urge the Committee to this bill a favorable report.

PLEASE NOTE: This testimony is offered on behalf of MAJR and not the Md. Judiciary.