

**Senate Bill 14 Favorable**  
**Fixing Maryland's Exoneree Compensation Law**  
**Demetrius Smith, *Baltimore Exoneree***  
**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**February 4, 2021**

My name is Demetrius Smith. When I was 24 years old I was wrongfully convicted of murdering a man named Robert Long in Baltimore. I was convicted because a jailhouse witness testified that he saw me commit the crime. He lied to avoid prison time in his own case.

The truth finally came out during a federal investigation of a man named Juan Morales. The investigation showed that Morales ordered a hitman to kill Robert Long because Long was going to testify against him. While I was sitting in prison, Morales committed more crimes. Eventually Morales and the hitman were convicted of killing Long and I regained my freedom.

The wrongful conviction hurt my family in so many ways. My daughter grew up without me. She was a baby when I left, and a grownup when I returned. I had to get to know my child and rebuild our relationship.

I served time in prison for another man's crime, but I am not eligible for compensation under Maryland's law. That's because I wasn't exonerated through the writ of actual innocence law.

There are different ways that people can overturn their wrongful convictions in Maryland. Why does it matter which law was used to exonerate me? Why isn't the undeniable proof that I was incarcerated when I was innocent enough to get the compensation I deserve?

It's been hard to restart my life without compensation, and COVID-19 has only made things worse. After my release I started a landscaping business, and it suffered during the lockdowns. I also work in a hospital and was infected with COVID-19.

Senate Bill 14 would give me a fair chance to apply for compensation from the state that took my freedom. I hope you will pass it because it is the right thing to do.