



HB 158- Maryland New Start Act of 2022  
House Ways and Means Committee  
January 26, 2022  
SUPPORT

Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 158. This bill will create or support existing entrepreneurship development programs for formerly incarcerated individuals.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Job security is one of the biggest barriers that contributes to recidivism for formerly incarcerated individuals. Having low job security limits access to stable housing, healthcare, and basic necessities. Even though Maryland prohibits criminal record screening practices<sup>1</sup>, there many ways that formerly incarcerated individuals can struggle to secure employment. COVID-19 has made securing employment even more difficult. Many formerly incarcerated individuals had training before being incarcerated or received training through programs offered by the Department of Corrections. This means that with proper support, formerly incarcerated individuals have skills to create job security for themselves and others.

HB 158 will expand organizational capacity for programs to help formerly incarcerated individuals. The Financial Education and Capability Commission conducted a survey of financial capability efforts across Maryland in 2021. This survey shows the top three barriers for organizations are staffing, funding, and participation<sup>2</sup>. COVID-19 decreased the capacity of many non-profits providing essential services. Providing funding for programs that focus on entrepreneurship development programs for formerly incarcerated individuals will allow programs to:

- Hire and pay staff to administer program
- Support daily operations of the program, and
- Give organizations more options to increase participation

HB 158 will strengthen formerly incarcerated individuals' connection to the workforce and ensure that programs will have the organizational capacity to administer it.

***Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 158.***

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Department of Labor  
<sup>2</sup> Financial Education and Capability Commission 2021 Report