



Maryland Hotel  
Lodging Association

**Testimony in Opposition to HB 788**

Human Relations - Protections Against Discrimination - Criminal Records  
February 20, 2024 – House Judiciary Committee

The Maryland Hotel Lodging Association (MHLA) serves as the sole statewide trade association dedicated to advocacy for Maryland’s 750+ hotels. Our industry employs more than 25,000 individuals and provides the state with \$1 billion in state and local taxes, \$5 billion in total wages and salaries, and \$9 billion in total gross domestic product.

MHLA supports anti-discriminatory policies that ensure a welcoming environment for all hotel employees and guests. The lodging industry is also highly committed to going the extra mile to ensure a safe stay, as demonstrated by our public 5-Star Promise.

It’s because of our commitment to ensuring a safe stay for our employees and guests that we are concerned by HB 788, which prohibits discrimination based on an individual’s criminal record in areas including public accommodations, commercial leasing, housing and employment.

Hoteliers, as both employers and innkeepers, have the responsibility to exercise “Duty of Care” and “Reasonable Care” to our guests and our employees. When it comes to hiring decisions, we must do our due diligence to research and consider the criminal history of potential employees that could compromise the safety of employees, guests and hotel assets. Such criminal behavior could include, but is not limited to, assault, hate crimes, sexual abuse / crimes, fraud and theft.

Given the proximity that our staff has to our guests, as well as each other, we must always be cognizant of the exchanges and actions that could possibly occur within our properties. Our employees are oftentimes near our guests while performing job related tasks within guest rooms and public areas. Staff members performing tasks within occupied guest rooms are alone in direct proximity with personal belongings and, occasionally, guests themselves. Furthermore, administrative, sales and front office employees have access to potentially sensitive personal and/or financial information. Failure to fulfill our “Duty of Care” and “Reasonable Care” hospitality standards would not only increase liability but could lead to a toxic and potentially dangerous environment for both our employees and guests.

We are supportive of policies that provide a “second chance” and there are some hotel jobs that are appropriate for individuals with certain criminal histories. However, we feel this bill does not adequately enable a hotelier to take appropriate steps to fulfill our “Duty of Care” and “Reasonable Care” hospitality standards, which would not only increase liability but could lead to a toxic and potentially dangerous environment for both our employees and guests.

For these reasons, the Maryland Hotel Lodging Association respectfully requests an Unfavorable Report on HB 788.