

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

PO Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827 • [wdc@womensdemocraticclub.org](mailto:wdc@womensdemocraticclub.org)

Montgomery County Council Legislation

Bill 8-24 - Human Rights and Civil Liberties – Fair Criminal History and Credit Screenings  
– Amendments

Committee: Planning, Housing & Parks

Hearing: June 18, 2024

**SUPPORT**

June 17, 2024

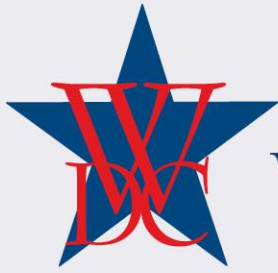
Dear Councilmembers Friedson, Fani-Gonzalez and Jawando,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning a priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)**. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, and [our advocacy work](#) centers on helping to achieve racial, social, and economic equity for women and their families.

WDC urges the passage of 8-24 in order to reduce homelessness and housing practices that contribute to racial disparities and adverse impacts on women and their families. This bill specifically addresses the issue of housing access for individuals with criminal records.

Current County [law](#) already prohibits a landlord from conducting a criminal background check before making an offer to rent to a prospective tenant, but the law lacks an enforcement mechanism.

8-24 rectifies this deficiency by requiring landlords to post a notice about using criminal records in rental decisions and include criminal and credit screening information in their annual housing survey sent to the County. The intent of 8-24 is to make rental housing more accessible for those who have encountered our criminal justice system to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society.



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**This bill reduces racial disparities.** There is a clear disparate racial impact of housing policies that exclude people on the basis of criminal background. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) such policies likely violate the Fair Housing Act.

**This bill reduces homelessness:** People who are formerly incarcerated are almost 10 times more likely to be homeless according to the [Prison Policy Initiative](#). Women's homelessness presents a huge problem for the security of American families.

**This bill supports the well-being of women and their families:** While roughly 10% of MD's prison population are women, they still represent a larger portion of prisoners than in all previous decades, according to a [report](#) by *Housing Studies*. Women who are single parent households and have prior justice system involvement need laws with teeth to help them and their children live in safe housing.

WDC sees this bill as necessary so that when released from prison, women can find housing for their families and reintegrate into society. In order to ensure that having a criminal record is not a significant barrier to securing housing, we ask for your support for 8-24.

Tazeen Ahmad  
WDC President

Janet Frank  
WDC Advocacy Committee