

ORAL TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE REDEEM ACT

Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Modifications

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings

FROM: Aaron D. Thompson, Co-Founder and CEO, HTP Homes, Inc.

DATE: February 1, 2023

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to speak today in support of the REDEEM Act.

My name is Aaron Thompson, the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of HTP Homes a community-based 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization that teaches construction and job readiness skills to at-risk and justice system involved individuals living in Baltimore City. During the training period, we provide direct payments in the form of stipends to the participants, and when they have successfully completed the training we guarantee them full time jobs with construction companies and other industries.

Every day we strive to empower each person we serve to be productive and successful members of their communities. Some of our Building Second Chances Program participants are here today. They are determined to change their lives, and committed to living a future free of criminal activity. But every day I witness how barriers to their successful re-entry adds to their struggles to do better.

I thank this legislative body for bringing forth policy changes that encourage rather than inhibit successful re-entry. That's why I support the REDEEM Act as a means of reducing the impact of incarceration and enhancing employment opportunities for returning citizens, lower-income workers and job seekers throughout the state.

Maryland has drastically longer waiting periods for expungement than most other states. The extended waiting period kicks in after they have completed their entire sentence, parole or probation, drug treatment, and any mandatory supervision. In most instances, the waiting periods are far longer than the actual sentence, leaving individuals released from incarceration with unnecessary barriers to education, employment, housing, and much more.

Reducing these waiting periods, the REDEEM Act will positively impact the 1.5 million Maryland residents who are shut out of the workforce due to a criminal record. Everyone must work if they expect to support themselves and their families. Maryland law should not be the

reason returning citizens are locked out of employment opportunities over a decade after they have served their time.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on The REDEEM Act.