

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE REDEEM ACT

(HB97)

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Octavion Thomas, JOTF Trainee

DATE: February 9, 2023

I, Octavion Thomas, support the REDEEM Act as a means of reducing the impact of incarceration and enhancing employment opportunities for lower-income workers and job seekers throughout the state.

This is a great concept for those whom may have fallen victim to the justice system such as myself and others. It is a grave hindrance to those seeking gainful employment and ways to sustain a good standard of life. For instance, I think that it is unfair to constantly use a person's past criminal offenses in regards to future events. I have a criminal history that included drug offenses and I served my time; this was done 8 years ago.

Because of this past, I can't move on. I have personally have been going through this being held back because of my past for a great deal of my life. It even followed me to traffic court. For instance, I just had a traffic case and the state attorney kept making reference to my background which depicted me as a constant law breaker [their exact words]! The current system and this type of attitude have affected my life outcomes or prospects when all I was charged with recently was driving on suspended license.

It is totally unfair that after I have served my time, and am no longer in the same lifestyle that I once was, that I continue to be punished. When is this over? This is why I feel the Redeem Act is necessary and should be highly considered.

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

Octavion Thomas

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