

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE REDEEM ACT:
Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Modifications

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

FROM: Rebecca Gardner

DATE: February 9, 2023

I urge you to support HB 97 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.

As you may well know Maryland has drastically longer waiting periods for expungement than most other states. Maryland Code Ann., Criminal Procedure §10–110 states that an individual must wait 10 years before they are eligible to expunge most nonviolent misdemeanor convictions from their record, 15 years for a common-law battery or 2nd-degree assault conviction, and 15 years for a non-violent felony. The 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 barriers to education, employment, housing, public assistance, occupational licensing, and much more.

We have a responsibility as Maryland citizens to make reentry into civil society something that is doable, that employment is accessible, that the corrective prison sentence opens the way to a life of responsibility and respect and away from joblessness and recidivism.

The REDEEM Act simply shortens the waiting periods after they have completed their entire sentence, parole or probation, drug treatment, and any mandatory supervision with the express intent of removing barriers to employment. Reducing these waiting periods will grant access to Record Expungement Designed to Enhance the Employability for the 1.5 million Marylanders (REDEEM) who are shut out of the workforce due to a criminal record. The provisions of The REDEEM Act align with what most other states are doing regardless of their political affiliation. Everyone must work if they expect to support themselves and their families. Maryland law shouldn't be the reason returning citizens are locked out of employment over a decade after they have served their time.

For these reasons, I ask your favorable report on The REDEEM Act. Thank you.

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