

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: Eric E. Sterling, J.D. (Executive Director, Criminal Justice Policy Foundation, 1989-2020)

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I support the REDEEM Act in order to strengthen communities in Maryland and the state's economy.

Hundreds of thousands of men and women in Maryland have a criminal record for conduct that is often many years old. Many young people -- impetuously or under the influence of drugs and alcohol -- engage in misconduct that led to an arrest that was resolved by a plea bargain and conviction. For most of these people this is the last time they were involved in the justice system. For others, the lessons took longer to learn, but they were learned, and now these men and women are seeking to be full participants in the society – raising families and earning a living.

**It must be the goal of society to maximize the number of people who can function fully in our society – as family members, earning a living, paying taxes, voting, and serving the community.**

Those old criminal records are a substantial barrier for the people who have them and hinder our state's economy and communities. It is in the public interest, as well as in the interest of justice, to enable people who have demonstrated that they are rehabilitated to live with a clean slate once again.

The REDEEM Act by substantially reducing the time period necessary to expunge criminal records advances the public interest. There are necessary exceptions to this general approach to protect against acts of violence and to assure that the victims of violence are not endangered. These bills provide such protections.

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

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