



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: **Dr. Carmen Johnson**

DATE: 1-25-2023

We are a 501c(3) women-led and Black-led nonprofit organization. Our mission is to equip impacted people (loved ones) by giving them the tools needed to succeed in family, community, housing, voting, jobs and knowing their rights. We also use preventive and diversion measures for youth, men, and woman. Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT) educates loved ones in assisting them with transformation into new citizens living productive lives; we use a one-on-one approach, employing the method of “see one, do one, teach one”. We build bridges between newly released loved ones and their communities, corporate America, small businesses, and elected officials to understand the importance of supporting the needs of impacted youth, men and women. Our efforts create a shared understanding that reduces recidivism and moves us closer to the cure for mass incarceration that brings mass liberation.

I am Dr. Carmen Johnson, Founder of Helping Ourselves to Transform. We support(s) 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.

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.

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, we urge a favorable report on The REDEEM Act.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carmen Johnson

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