

**WRITTEN SUPPORT TESTIMONY**

**FOR THE REDEEM ACT HB097**

From

**Dr. Carmen Johnson on 1-24-2023**

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

**I, Dr. Carmen Johnson**, I want to share personally that it hurts me to know that even though 31% Marylanders are Black, more than 70% of Maryland's prison population is Black. And about 80% of people serving 10 years or more in Maryland prisons are Black. Maryland has the highest incarceration rate in the nation of Black men aged 18 to 24. Currently, the state of Maryland imprisons 3,000 people over age 50, and nearly 1,000 individuals who are 60 or older.

*With this said I support(s) the REDEEM Act as a means of reducing the impact of mass incarceration and enhancing employment opportunities for lower-income workers and job seekers around the state of Maryland*

Subjectively, Maryland has a drastically longer waiting periods for expungement than most other states. Why do a loved one home from prison, jail camp or a cage have to 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? In most instances, the waiting periods are *far* longer than the actual sentence, leaving individuals released from incarceration with barriers to restart their lives.

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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