

STATEMENT OF  
**ERIC E. STERLING, J.D.<sup>1</sup>**  
SUBMITTED TO  
THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
HON. LUKE CLIPPINGER, CHAIR  
HON. DAVID MOON, VICE CHAIR  
FEBRUARY 14, 2023

**IN SUPPORT OF  
HB 97, THE REDEEM ACT—  
Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Modifications**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, Members of the Committee, I support HB 97 and urge you to give it a favorable report because it will strengthen communities in Maryland and the state's economy.

Hundreds of thousands of men and women in Maryland have a criminal record. In most cases, this record is for conduct that is now many years old. When I began trying criminal cases in the 1970s, it became apparent to me – as I am sure you are aware – most offenders are young people frequently acting impetuously or under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Usually, the misconduct was resolved by a plea bargain and conviction. And for most of these people this is the last time they were involved in the justice system. For others, of course, the lessons took longer to learn, but they were learned. Now years and often decades later, most of these men and women would be full participants in the society – raising families and earning a living – but for the fact that they cannot earn what they could earn with the training, experience and attitude they now have *because of their criminal record*.

**Our common goal should be 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. Easing expungement of records supports this goal.**

Old criminal records are a substantial barrier to full civic and economic participation for the people who have them. Their economic handicaps, because of their old criminal records, hinders Maryland's economy and their communities, and reduces state revenues. 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.

Hypothesize that 100,000 persons, taking advantage of the REDEEM Act, earn ONLY \$1.00 per hour more than they had been earning. That's about \$2000 per year each or \$200,000,000 in additional income per year. That's significant state income tax revenue and the opportunity for families to spend on education, housing, medical care, etc.

The REDEEM Act substantially reduces the time period necessary to expunge criminal records, increasing the number of persons eligible and thereby advances the public interest. The bill appropriately includes necessary exceptions to this general approach to protect against acts of violence and to assure that the victims of violence are not endangered.

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

Eric E. Sterling  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
(18<sup>th</sup> District)  
eric.sterling@gmail.com

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<sup>i</sup> Eric E. Sterling, J.D., was Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Policy Foundation (1989 – 2020). In Montgomery County, he served on the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council (2009-2018, including three terms as Chair), and is currently Chair of the Montgomery County Policing Advisory Commission (2020 to date). He was Assistant Counsel to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime (1979-1989). He is testifying on his own behalf. He has lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative District 25 years.