



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE REDEEM ACT:

Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Modifications

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

DATE: January 25, 2023

LAR is a formerly incarcerated women-led organization in the DMV area (DC-Maryland-Virginia). We are organizing to build a post-conviction movement where we have the right to challenge our convictions and the system responsible for convicting us in the first place. Our work is grounded in a vision of self-determination for directly impacted communities and has four main pillars. We bring together formerly incarcerated people and movement lawyers to expose unjust laws, unconstitutional practices and prosecutorial misconduct that are driving thousands of us to prison and a life of collateral consequences. Our goal is both to build a formidable legal self-defense to mitigate against the daily harm and a broader movement through educating the public. Most Black and Brown women are being policed and prosecuted for crimes of poverty while trying to provide for their families. Our goal is to end this criminalization and ultimately abolish the criminal legal system as we know it. We run a community court watch program in Prince George’s County, MD to hold prosecutors, judges, and the overall system accountable to its purported purpose and reform goals. Our findings have been the basis for publicly released reports on the implementation of bail reform and a prosecutor accountability campaign against the PG County State’s Attorney’s Office. We have 40 trained volunteers driving this program.

I am Ms. Qiana Johnson and we at LAR 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 **E**nhance the **E**mployability for the 1.5 million **M**arylanders (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.

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