



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE REDEEM ACT:**

**Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Modifications**

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Deandre Wiggins, Program Manager

DATE: January 31st, 2023

**BetterU Construction** support(s) the REDEEM Act as a means of reducing the impact of incarceration and enhancing employment opportunities for our carpentry, plumbing, and electrical trainees in Baltimore Maryland.

BetterU Construction Training is a 14-week pre-apprenticeship program for Baltimore residents with a high school diploma or GED. Experienced teachers prepare our students for success in the construction trades with an overview of entry-level plumbing, carpentry, and electrical skills. Students also receive essential safety training, financial coaching, a stipend, and driver's education. More than 70 percent of students are placed in careers that lead to high wages and apprenticeships.

The majority of our trainees are formerly incarcerated persons who have been locked out of access to employment and we have seen examples of our team successfully placing individuals only to have records from 20+ years ago pop up on the background check and have them removed from their new position. This is a painfully disorienting process for them and we believe wholeheartedly that the REDEEM Act will greatly aid in their reentry.

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.