



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 499**

### **The Expungement Reform Act of 2025**

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Joseph Jones, CEO & President

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF), a West Baltimore workforce and family-strengthening community-based organization, advocates for legislative initiatives that strengthen urban communities by helping fathers and families achieve stability and economic success. In our 25-year history, we have served over 30,000 Marylanders, about half of whom have a criminal record.

First, I would like to thank Governor Moore and his team for delivering on the promise they made last July when they said the Governor's mass marijuana pardon was only the first step in building a state and society that is "more equitable, more just, and leaves no one behind." HB 499 is another critical move forward.

One of CFUF's core programs is STRIVE Baltimore, a 3-week workforce program focused on helping individuals build the hard skills and the soft skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment. This body has made excellent progress in expanding access to expungement relief, but there is more work to be done. CFUF offers STRIVE classes monthly and in every single class 10 to 15 people tell us that although they have submitted dozens of job applications, their criminal record has prevented them from working. This is not a surprise – a 2020 Bureau of Justice Statistics funded study found that 1-in-4 working Marylanders have a criminal record. Furthermore, the 2022 Abhisek decision determined that the 43% of Marylanders who violate parole or probation are not eligible for expungement.

When these individuals go on to graduate from our program, we see firsthand the challenges their records pose as we attempt to help them enter the workforce. More often than not, the fields open to them are low-wage, low-benefit, and offer limited opportunities for growth. A criminal record beats people down. It beats them down financially, it beats them down emotionally, and it beats down their hope that working hard and bettering themselves will lead to a brighter future.

I urge a favorable report.

Thank you,  
Joe

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