



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 432/ HOUSE BILL 499**

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

**March 21, 2025**

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

**FROM:** Dr. Carmen Johnson, Co-Founder and Chief Programs and Operations Officer (CPOO), Helping Ourselves to Transform

**RE: SUPPORT for Senate Bill 432 / House Bill 499 – Expungement Reform**

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committees,

My name is Dr. Carmen Johnson, and I serve as the Co-Founder and Chief Programs and Operations Officer for **Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT)**—a women-of-color-led, community-based, and movement-driven organization serving individuals and families impacted by systemic injustice and incarceration.

HOTT was established in 2018 with a mission to provide justice-impacted individuals with holistic support and equitable pathways for reentry, reintegration, and healing. We serve residents across the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, with a focused commitment to Prince George’s County and the D.C. metropolitan area. Our programs are designed to reduce recidivism, support family reunification, protect basic rights, and advocate for meaningful reform at both the grassroots and policy levels.

We strongly support **Senate Bill 432 / House Bill 499**, which would correct an unjust barrier to expungement by ensuring that probation violations do not create a permanent roadblock to relief for returning citizens.

In 2022, the Court of Special Appeals ruled that any probation violation—regardless of severity—renders a conviction indefinitely ineligible for expungement under the interpretation that the sentence was not “satisfactorily completed.” As a result, even minor technical violations, such as cannabis possession (now legalized and generating over \$700 million in revenue for Maryland), continue to disqualify individuals from clearing decades-old records.

While the REDEEM Act, passed in 2023, significantly reduced expungement waiting periods and was a step toward justice, it did not address the disproportionate and exclusionary impact of the *Abhishek* ruling. SB432/HB499 provides a common-sense remedy by changing the legal

standard from “satisfactory completion” to “expiration” of the sentence, including probation, parole, and mandatory supervision.

Under this legislation:

- Individuals who complete their sentence and meet the required waiting period (5–10 years) would be eligible for expungement.
- Prosecutors and victims would still retain the right to object, preserving due process and judicial discretion.
- The bill expands the list of eligible misdemeanors and removes all cannabis convictions from Case Search.

This bill is a fair, balanced, and urgently needed response to a ruling that continues to deny tens of thousands of Marylanders access to jobs, housing, education, and dignity. With approximately 25% of Maryland's working-age population carrying a criminal record, SB432/HB499 provides a critical second chance and promotes successful reintegration.

For all these reasons, **Helping Ourselves to Transform** strongly urges a **favorable report** on Senate Bill 432 / House Bill 499.

Sincerely,

***Dr. Carmen Johnson***

Co-Founder & Chief Programs and Operations Officer

Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT)

[www.helpingourselfstotransform.org](http://www.helpingourselfstotransform.org)

***Certified Paralegal with Advanced Studies in Criminal Law, Author, Advocate & Humanitarian. Lecture Specialist for prison and justice reform to Law Schools, Law Clinics, Students and the Community and a lobbyist in the State of Maryland***