



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB505
Criminal Procedure – Expungement – Convictions

March 8, 2023

Senator William C. Smith
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Marian House in Support of SB505

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

Marian House is a holistic, healing community for women and their children who are in need of housing and support services. Marian House provides comprehensive support services to assist women with experiences of trauma, including poverty, substance abuse, and incarceration. **I write to urge you to support Senate Bill 505 - Criminal Procedure – Expungement – Convictions with its amendments.**

Over forty years ago, Marian House was opened to provide reentry supports for women leaving incarceration as Sisters and laywomen recognized that lack of support contributed to recidivism rates. Today, we have also expanded to serve women with histories of trauma including homelessness, incarceration, neglect, substance abuse and mental health needs. Since our opening, we have assisted women who have been victims of crime in reinventing and rebuilding themselves through services such as: counseling, substance abuse treatment, job training and providing both long and short-term housing. All the women we have served have overcome obstacles on their journeys to become contributing members of society in the Baltimore area.

It is no secret that obtaining gainful employment and housing is contingent on a background check. Therefore, it is no surprise that individuals with history of convictions and criminal justice involvements face great barriers to achieving and maintaining a stable life after their release. By passing SB505, the State recognizes that no one is the sum of their mistakes and that everyone is deserving of a second chance. In Financial Year 22, Marian House served twenty-one women who had lived/resided in jail, prison, or a juvenile detention facility. Through these women, we have seen firsthand that they struggle to build confidence and independence as they have faced many barriers to employment and housing due to their former criminal records. By supporting SB505, the 1.5 million Marylanders, including those we serve at Marian House, will be able to expunge their records sooner and have access to the housing and employment they desperately need.

On behalf of the women we serve at Marian House, I respectfully urge you to take the call to action in **SUPPORT of SB505.**

Thank you for your support,

Katie Allston, LCSW-C
President and C.E.O.