

Good afternoon,

My name is Omani Placide, and I am a resident of the 40<sup>th</sup> District. I stand before you today to testify in strong support of SB 398, a bill that would automate the expungement process for eligible misdemeanors in Maryland.

I know firsthand how a criminal record—even for a minor offense—can derail a person’s future. My conviction wasn’t for a serious charge, yet it shut doors that should have been open to me. I lost access to gig economy work and was blocked from becoming a correctional officer. Not because of who I am, but because of what was on paper.

I was lucky. Someone in my network saw me for more than my past mistakes and gave me an opportunity as a youth organizer. Now, my job is to help young people—many who, like me, made a mistake but are trying to build a better future.

But here’s the truth: Most of them don’t even know expungement is possible. They don’t know their record could be cleared. They don’t have the resources to navigate the process. And even if they do, the cost alone can be a barrier. How can we expect someone to afford an expungement when their record keeps them from getting a decent-paying job in the first place?

A single mistake at 18 shouldn’t determine your entire life. It shouldn’t be the reason someone is stuck in a cycle of low-wage jobs with no room to grow. I know my life could have gone a very different way if I didn’t have the right support at the right time. That’s why I’m here—for the thousands of people like me who aren’t as lucky.

SB 398 is a chance to right a wrong in our system—to remove unnecessary barriers and give people a real shot at redemption. I urge you to support this bill. A favorable report doesn’t just change policies—it changes lives.

Thank you.