

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 432/ HOUSE BILL 499

Expungement Reform Act of 2025

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

FROM: **Dr. Carmen Johnson, Founder**

Helping Ourselves to Transform

Our mission is to invest in individuals maligned by the social and economic consequences of the injustice system through education, advocacy, and sustainable solutions for the betterment of communities. HOTT promotes civic engagement and strengthens democracy by equipping individuals with the necessary skills to actively participate in their communities and advocate for positive change. We work tirelessly to advance informed, inclusive, and purposeful civic participation that amplifies the voices of all citizens, leading to a more just and prosperous society for everyone. We are committed to fostering positive change, addressing pressing social challenges, and creating a brighter, more equitable future for all.

I Dr. Carmen Johnson support(s) Senate Bill 432/ House Bill 499 to reduce the impact of incarceration by eliminating probation violations as a permanent roadblock to criminal record expungement. In 2022, the **Court of Special Appeals** ruled that any **probation violation** renders a conviction **indefinitely ineligible for expungement**, regardless of the violation's nature. This decision has **barred countless Marylanders**, including those with decades-old misdemeanors, from clearing their records—impacting their ability to **secure jobs, housing, education, occupational licenses, and financial opportunities**. Notably, one individual was denied expungement due to a cannabis possession violation, despite **cannabis legalization generating \$700 million for the state in just one year**. Although the **Maryland General Assembly passed the REDEEM Act**, reducing expungement waiting periods, many remain **disqualified due to the Abhishek ruling**.

SB 432/HB 499 seeks to correct this injustice by:

- **Ensuring expungement eligibility** once a sentence, including probation, parole, or mandatory supervision, has expired.
- **Removing restrictive language** (“satisfies” and “satisfactorily”) that creates a blanket ban on expungements.
- **Expanding expungement eligibility** to additional misdemeanors and **removing all cannabis convictions** from Case Search.
- **Preserving judicial discretion**, allowing the **State’s Attorney and victims** to object to expungements under **Criminal Procedure §10–110(f)(1)**.

This is a **balanced and rational approach** to providing relief for the **estimated 25% of working-age Marylanders with a record**. For these reasons, we strongly urge a **favorable report**.

Sincerely

Dr. Carmen Johnson