

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 398/ HOUSE BILL 545

Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement

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

FROM: Omani Placide

DATE: March 4th, 2025

Good Afternoon,

My name is Omani Placide, and I reside in the 7th Congressional District. I am testifying today in **strong support** of Senate Bill 398 / House Bill 545, which 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 allowed me to become a youth organizer. Now, my job is to help young people—many who, like me, made mistakes but are trying to build a better future.

But here's the truth: **Most don't even know expungement is possible**. They don't know if 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 why 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 proper support at the right time. That's why I'm here—**for the thousands of people like me who aren't as lucky**.

Senate Bill 398 / House Bill 545 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!