

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 545

Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Zachary Alberts, Director of Advocacy

I am a resident of district 46 and the Director of Advocacy and Strategic Initiatives at the Center for Urban Families, a workforce and family strengthening program in Baltimore City. We are here to support House Bill 545, which will further our goal to remove the barrier a criminal record imposes on our clients' ability to find and retain employment.

At the Center for Urban Families, we help individuals that live in the most underserved, underrepresented, and disconnected areas in Baltimore City. What they also have in common is that they dream of something better and are actively participating in the training, coaching and skills building that will make that dream a reality. 50% of the individuals in our job training programs have a criminal record. This legislation will be a positive step toward ensuring that when they graduate, they are able to immediately begin employment and support themselves, their families, and their community.

Statewide, only 2% of eligible individuals pursue expungement. There are a variety of barriers to expungement relief, including cost, accessibility and legal literacy. Automating the process would substantially benefit the 98% of individuals whose criminal records currently block them from employment, housing and educational opportunities.

We urge a favorable report.

