



NAPD
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February 28, 2025

Testimony of Lori James, Executive Director of the National Association of Public Defense

HB55 –Expungement of Records - Good Cause

2-minute testimony **Hearing Date: Tuesday, March 4, House Judiciary Committee – 1pm**

Honorable Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am Lori James. I have spent my entire professional career involved in criminal justice reform and/or public defense. I stand before you today as the Executive Director of the National Association for Public Defense. “NAPD connects, inspires and empowers public defender professionals to fight for racial, economic, social justice and champion the constitutional mandate of public defense.” NAPD was formed in 2013- , fifty years after the US Supreme Court recognized the right to counsel as “fundamental and necessary and has a membership of 25,000+ practitioners from across the country, who are guided by the 15 Principles of Public Defense.

Principle 14 states that Public Defense Lawyers and Public Defense Professionals are Essential Participants in Achieving Justice Reforms. And we believe that reform must provide an opportunity for reconciliation, redemption, and restoration. include

HB55 - Expungement for Good Cause – represents progress toward justice reform.

NAPD believes we are an “irrepressible community capable of bringing justice to a broken system.” Our voice here today is our belief in second chances and rehabilitation.

HB55 also addresses our 12th which states that Providers Must Address Disparate Treatment of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Justice Systems.”

The Racial Equity Impact Note for HB55 fully emphasizes the disparities. “The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services reports that, as of January 1, 2025, Black individuals made up 71% of Maryland’s prison population contrasted with their 29% share of the State’s overall population.”

Members of the committee, on behalf of the National Association for Public Defense, I urge you to issue a favorable report for HB55 for it represents a path towards ensuring fair and just legal

systems for all, particularly for those willing to make amends and move forward constructively with their lives.

Sincerely,



Lori James, MSW, LCSW-C
Executive Director