
Testimony of Robert Stokes in Support of HB0055
Maryland House Bill Hearing

Good afternoon, my name is Robert Stokes, and I am here today on behalf of America Works and myself to speak in strong support of HB0055.

After 38 years of incarceration, I know firsthand the challenges of reintegration. Finding employment has been one of the most difficult hurdles, as many employers are hesitant to hire individuals with criminal records. Housing presents another major barrier—many landlords refuse to rent to former inmates, and public housing policies often exclude people with past convictions. Without stable employment and housing, the risk of recidivism increases, not because people want to return to crime, but because they feel they have no other options.

Expungement plays a crucial role in addressing these barriers. HB0055 would provide individuals like me with a real chance to move forward, free from the stigma of a past conviction. The ability to clear a record opens doors to better jobs, stable housing, and a renewed sense of dignity. It helps ensure that people who have served their time are not punished indefinitely but are instead given the opportunity to fully reintegrate into society.

I was fortunate to receive support through America Works, which helped me find employment at a warehouse and secure stable housing. But many others do not have that same level of assistance. Expungement would provide thousands of Marylanders with a fair shot at rebuilding their lives, contributing to their communities, and staying on the right path.

I urge you to pass HB0055 and remove these unnecessary barriers to successful reentry. Thank you for your time and consideration.