

# Testimony SB0138 / HB0084

## The Path Act

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Good afternoon, Senator Will Smith, Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher and Judicial Committee,

My name is Sackiella Sackie, and I am a resident of Hyattsville, Maryland. I am writing in strong support of the PATH Act. I currently serve as the Lead Intern and Executive Assistant with Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT), an organization committed to trauma-informed advocacy, community healing, and justice-centered reform. I am also a sociology major at Bowie State University, preparing for advanced clinical and policy work in social services. I respectfully urge you to pass this critical legislation.

Through my work with Helping Ourselves to Transform, I have witnessed firsthand how trauma, untreated mental health needs, and lack of appropriate intervention push individuals, especially Black and Brown communities deeper into the criminal legal system instead of toward healing. Many of the individuals we serve are not inherently criminal; they are survivors of violence, neglect, poverty, substance use disorders, and systemic inequities. The current system often responds with punishment rather than understanding, which only perpetuates cycles of harm.

The PATH Act is important because it recognizes what so many communities have long known: accountability and healing are not mutually exclusive. This bill creates a pathway for

justice-involved individuals to receive trauma-informed care, behavioral health support, and rehabilitative services rather than defaulting to incarceration. It prioritizes prevention, restoration, and long-term public safety, outcomes that punitive approaches alone have consistently failed to achieve.

In my experience working alongside survivors, families, and justice-impacted individuals, I have seen how access to the right support at the right time can completely change someone's life trajectory. When people are given the opportunity to address the root causes of their behavior—whether it is trauma, addiction, or untreated mental illness, they are far more likely to reintegrate successfully into their communities, maintain stability, and avoid future system involvement.

Passing the PATH Act is not only a matter of justice reform; it is a matter of public health, racial equity, and fiscal responsibility. Investing in trauma-informed alternatives reduces recidivism, strengthens families, and lowers long-term costs to the state. More importantly, it affirms the dignity and humanity of individuals who deserve a second chance and access to meaningful support.

On behalf of many voices we services; survivors, families, and community members, I strongly urge a favorable report on SB0138 / HB0084. Maryland has the opportunity to lead with compassion, evidence-based policy, and courage. The PATH Act moves us closer to a justice system that truly heals rather than harms.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to the people of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

**Sackiella Sackie**

