

## **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 Nasir Ali Jenkins, and I am writing in full support of the PATH Act, I serve as a college intern with Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT), I am a part of an organization committed to trauma-informed advocacy, community healing, and justice-centered reform. I am a recent graduate of Bowie State University with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a focus in Social Justice, this degree and education have prepared me for advanced legal and policy work in social services.

Through my work with Helping Ourselves to Transform, I have seen how untreated trauma, mental health needs, and lack of appropriate intervention—particularly in Black, Brown, and Queer communities—push individuals deeper into the criminal legal system rather than toward healing. Many justice-involved individuals are survivors of violence, poverty, substance use disorders, and systemic inequities, yet the current system too often responds with punishment instead of care, perpetuating cycles of harm. An additional demographic that is often overlooked and under reported are men, who are usually too embarrassed to come forward and report abuse.

The PATH Act acknowledges that accountability and healing can coexist. It provides justice-involved individuals access to trauma-informed care, behavioral health support, and rehabilitative services, prioritizing prevention, restoration, and long-term public safety over incarceration. My experience working with survivors and justice-impacted individuals shows that addressing root causes such as trauma, addiction, and untreated mental illness significantly and reduces future system involvement.

Passing the PATH Act is not only a matter of justice reform, but also of public health, racial equity, and fiscal responsibility. Trauma-informed alternatives reduce recidivism, strengthen families, and lower long-term costs while affirming the dignity and humanity of those deserving meaningful support. On behalf of survivors, families, and community members, I strongly urge a favorable report and decision on SB0138 and HB0084.

The PATH Act moves Maryland closer to a justice system that heals rather than harms.