



UNITE HERE Local 25

Testimony of Samuel Epps

Political Director, UNITE HERE Local 25
IN FAVOR of Senate Bill 14—Fixing Exoneree Compensation
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 4, 2021

UNITE HERE Local 25, (Local 25 for short), is a hospitality workers union, which represents over 7,200 workers in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. We represent workers across a huge cross section of departments from the front and back of the hotel. We are here to urge a favorable report of Senate Bill 14.

Criminal justice reform is becoming a core component of Local 25's advocacy. Our broken, racist criminal justice system disproportionately targets the working-class people of color who make up our union. Many of our members are returning citizens. We are a union that believes in fairness, justice and equality. That's why, as a labor union, we must be at the forefront of criminal justice reform, to help those who have been wrongly convicted re-enter the workplace with dignity.

Senate Bill 14 would fix Maryland's broken exoneree compensation law. In our state, 80 percent of wrongfully convicted people are Black. After losing years, and often decades of their lives, many of these innocent people have been ineligible for compensation. They are forced to restart their lives without any financial justice from the state that unjustly took their freedom.

When the legal system wrongfully convicts an innocent person, it must take responsibility for repairing the damage. Fair compensation for the innocent is key to furthering racial justice and healing the wounds inflicted on communities of color.

UNITE HERE Local 25 supports Senate Bill 14 because it is the right thing to do for the wrongfully convicted. Please join us in supporting this bill.

When the state unjustly takes an innocent person's freedom, it has the responsibility to repair the damage.

For these reasons, UNITE HERE Local 25 urges a favorable report of SB 14.