

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE REDEEM ACT:

Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Modifications

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committee

FROM: **Elizabeth Weber, Acting Executive Director**

The Southwest Partnership is a coalition of seven neighborhood associations and six anchor institutions in Southwest Baltimore. We work to implement our Vision Plan for our seven neighborhoods and build an awesome, healthy, architecturally beautiful, diverse, cohesive community of choice built on mutual respect and shared responsibility.

As the Workforce Development Committee, we are a group of committed community members who work together to ensure that all of our neighbors have access to high quality, family sustaining employment. One of our key strategies is to ‘reduce barriers to employment and develop workforce opportunities in the Southwest Partnership area’. A criminal record is a huge barrier to employment and one that disproportionately impacts members of our community--people in poverty, Black people, and other people of color.

We know from our experience with Southwest Works, our workforce development program, and from our work with other workforce development partners in the area that a criminal record is a major barrier. Baltimore City, and our neighborhoods, among others, in particular, relies on hospitals and universities as a major industry and a source of good, local jobs.

Southwest Partnership supports the REDEEM Act as a means of reducing the impact of incarceration and enhancing employment opportunities for lower-income workers and job seekers throughout the state.

Maryland has drastically longer waiting periods for expungement than most other states. [Maryland Code Ann., Criminal Procedure §10–110](#) states that an individual must wait **10 years** before they are eligible to expunge most *nonviolent* misdemeanor convictions from their record, **15 years** for a common-law battery or 2nd-degree assault conviction, and **15 years** for a non-violent felony. The waiting period kicks in *after* they have completed their entire sentence, parole or probation, drug treatment, *and* any mandatory supervision. In most instances, the waiting periods are *far* longer than the actual sentence, leaving individuals released from incarceration with barriers to education, employment, housing, public assistance, occupational licensing, and much more.

The REDEEM Act simply shortens the waiting periods *after* they have completed their entire sentence, parole or probation, drug treatment, *and* any mandatory supervision with the express intent of removing barriers to employment. Reducing these waiting periods will grant access to **Record Expungement Designed to Enhance the Employability for the 1.5 million Marylanders (REDEEM)** who are shut out of the workforce due to a criminal record. The provisions of The REDEEM Act align with what most other states are doing regardless of their political affiliation. Everyone must work if they expect to support themselves and their families. Maryland law shouldn’t be the reason returning citizens are locked out of

employment over a decade *after* they have served their time. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on The REDEEM Act.