

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2020 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 1247  
Judiciary

(Delegate Conaway)

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**Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Explanation of Unit Rule**

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This bill requires an attorney representing a defendant charged with multiple criminal offenses to explain to the defendant the meaning and potential consequences of the “unit rule” for expungements before the defendant enters into any plea agreement.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill is procedural and is not anticipated to materially affect State finances or operations, as discussed below.

**Local Effect:** The bill is procedural and is not anticipated to materially affect local finances or operations, as discussed below.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** To begin the process of expungement, a petitioner must file a petition for expungement with the court under § 10-105 or § 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article, which establishes eligibility for the expungement of records pertaining to a criminal charge or conviction.

Expungement of a court or police record means removal from public inspection:

- by obliteration;
- by removal to a separate secure area to which persons who do not have a legitimate reason for access are denied access; or
- if access to a court record or police record can be obtained only by reference to another such record, by the expungement of that record, or the part of it that provides access.

Pursuant to § 10-107 of the Criminal Law Article, if two or more charges, other than one for a minor traffic violation, arise from the same incident, transaction, or set of facts, they are considered to be a unit. If a person is not entitled to expungement of one charge or conviction in a unit, the person is not entitled to expungement of any other charge in the unit. This “unit rule” applies to expungements under §§ 10-105 and 10-110.

#### *Section 10-105 of the Criminal Procedure Article*

Under § 10-105 of the Criminal Procedure Article, a person who has been charged with the commission of a crime for which a term of imprisonment may be imposed or who has been charged with a civil offense or infraction, except a juvenile offense, may file a petition for expungement of a police record, court record, or other record maintained by the State or a political subdivision of the State, under various circumstances listed in the statute. These grounds include acquittal, dismissal of charges, entry of probation before judgment, entry of *nolle prosequi*, stet of charge, and gubernatorial pardon. Individuals convicted of a crime that is no longer a crime, convicted of possession of marijuana under § 5-601 of the Criminal Law Article, or convicted of or found not criminally responsible for specified public nuisance crimes or specified misdemeanors are also eligible for expungement of the associated criminal records under certain circumstances.

In general, a petition for expungement under § 10-105 may not be filed until three years after the disposition, unless the petitioner files a written waiver and release of all tort claims arising from the charge.

A person is not entitled to expungement if (1) subject to a specified exception, the petition is based on the entry of probation before judgment and the person, within three years of the entry of the probation before judgment, has been convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic violation or a crime where the act on which the conviction is based is no longer a crime or (2) the person is a defendant in a pending criminal proceeding.

*Section 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article*

Section 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article authorizes an individual convicted of any of a list of approximately 100 specified offenses or an attempt, a conspiracy, or a solicitation of any of these offenses, to file a petition for expungement of the conviction, subject to specified procedures and requirements. An itemized list of convictions eligible for expungement under § 10-110 is shown in the **Appendix – Convictions Eligible for Expungement**.

In general, a petition for expungement of these convictions is subject to a 10-year waiting period from when the petitioner completed the sentences imposed for all convictions for which expungement is sought, including parole, probation, or mandatory supervision. However, a petition for expungement of a felony or a conviction for misdemeanor second-degree assault, common law battery, or for an offense classified as a domestically related crime under § 6-233 of the Criminal Procedure Article is subject to a 15-year waiting period.

*Timeline for Expungement*

Maryland’s expungement process for removing an eligible record takes a minimum of 90 days. If a State’s Attorney or victim, as applicable, objects, the court must hold a hearing on the petition. If an objection is not filed within 30 days, as specified, the court must pass an order requiring the expungement of all police and court records concerning the charges. After the court orders are sent to each required agency, each agency has 60 days from receipt to comply with the order.

**Background:** **Exhibit 1** contains information on the number of cases with multiple charges filed in the trial courts from fiscal 2015 through 2019.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Cases with Multiple Charges**  
**District Court and Circuit Courts**  
**Fiscal 2015-2019**

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
<b>District Court</b>	63,115	62,764	62,081	59,754	60,518
<b>Circuit Courts</b>	39,820	39,263	36,085	34,643	32,862

Source: Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts)

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**Exhibit 2** contains information on the number of petitions for expungement filed in the trial courts from fiscal 2015 through 2019.

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**Exhibit 2**  
**Petitions for Expungement**  
**Fiscal 2015-2019**

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
District Court	32,726	39,706	47,697	62,631	74,508
Circuit Courts	2,448	4,706	6,811	7,909	10,951

Source: Maryland Judiciary

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According to the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy’s 2019 annual report, the commission received sentencing guidelines worksheets for 93.2% of guidelines-eligible circuit court cases. Approximately 83.9% of the cases were resolved by some type of plea agreement (48.5% by an American Bar Association (ABA) plea agreement and 35.4% by a non-ABA plea agreement).

**State/Local Fiscal Effect:** The bill is procedural and is not expected to materially affect State or local finances or operations. The Judiciary advises that the bill may result in increased court time due to fewer plea agreements and an increase in cases progressing to trial, but cannot predict the magnitude of any such increase at this time. However, the Office of the Public Defender notes that it currently advises clients of the potential expungement consequences of a plea agreement as part of its routine representation procedures. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent a defendant would decide not to pursue a plea agreement that may offer a lesser sentence or penalty in the present *solely* for the chance of more favorable expungement options in the future.

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**Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Office of the Public Defender; Maryland State’s Attorneys’ Association; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Maryland State Archives; Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 6, 2020  
mr/jkb

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# Appendix – Convictions Eligible for Expungement

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## Convictions Eligible for Expungement under Section 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article

### Misdemeanors Eligible for Expungement

#### Alcoholic Beverages Article

AB, § 6-320 – Disorderly Intoxication

#### Business Occupations and Professions Article

BOP, § 17-613(a): Crimes relating to real estate brokers and agents (*e.g.*, failure to deposit money in trust accounts, engaging in discriminatory real estate practices, acting as a dual agent, providing brokerage services without a license, *etc.*)

#### Business Regulation Article

BR, § 5-610: Violation of Business Regulation Article, Title 5, Subtitle 6 (perpetual care of cemeteries)

BR, § 5-712: Failure to deposit money received under or in connection with a preneed burial contract

BR, § 5-904: Violation of any provision of Title 5, Subtitle 9 of the Business Regulation Article (cemetery-related violations – failure to register as operator, operating a cemetery without the proper form of business entity, and unauthorized representations)

BR, § 19-304: Violations of laws relating to returnable containers and returnable textiles (improper use, improper registration, defacing, *etc.*)

BR, § 19-308: Violations of laws relating to plastic secondary packaging

#### Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article

CJ, § 3-1508: Failure to comply with a peace order

CJ, § 10-402: Divulging contents of communications (subsection (d))

#### Commercial Law Article

CL, § 14-1915: Violations of the Maryland Credit Services Businesses Act

CL, § 14-2902: False and fraudulent advertising

CL, § 14-2903: Bait and switch

## Criminal Procedure Article

CP, § 5-211: Failure to surrender after forfeiture of bail or recognizance

## Criminal Law Article

CR, § 3-203: Assault in the second degree (misdemeanor)

CR, § 3-808: Filing a fraudulent lien or encumbrance

CR, § 5-601: Possession or administration of a controlled dangerous substance (not involving use or possession of marijuana)

CR, § 5-618: Possession or purchase of noncontrolled substance that the person reasonably believes is a controlled substance

CR, § 5-619: Use or possession of drug paraphernalia

CR, § 5-620: Obtaining, possessing, or distributing controlled paraphernalia

CR, § 5-703: Unsolicited mailing of a controlled dangerous substance, prescription drug, or medicine

CR, § 5-708: Smelling or inhaling harmful substances

CR, § 5-902: Omitting, removing, altering, or obliterating a symbol required by federal law for a substance governed by Title 5 of the Criminal Law Article (controlled dangerous substance (CDS), prescriptions, and other substances); refusal or failure to maintain specified documentation required under Title 5; refusing entry into a premises or inspection of a premises authorized under Title 5), maintaining a place resorted to by others for illegal use of CDS or for the keeping or selling of a CDS; unauthorized manufacturing, dispensing, or distribution of CDS by a registrant; CDS/paraphernalia-related violations by authorized provider; and contraband

CR, § 6-105: Malicious burning of personal property in the second degree

CR, § 6-108: Willful and malicious burning of a trash container

CR, § 6-206: Breaking and entering a motor vehicle – rogue and vagabond

CR, § 6-303: Public utility interference – electrical equipment

CR, § 6-306: Alteration of manufacturer's serial number or sale of good with altered serial number

CR, § 6-307: Sale or possession of stolen serial number or vehicle identification plate or possession of a manufactured serial number or vehicle identification plate with intent to affix to stolen property or use for fraudulent purposes

CR, § 6-402: Trespass on posted property

CR, § 6-503: Unauthorized riding on railroad vehicle or unauthorized entry onto railroad property

CR, § 7-104: General theft (less than \$100 and at least \$100 but less than \$1,500)

CR, § 7-203: Unauthorized removal of property

CR, § 7-205: Abandonment of or failure to return leased or rented motor vehicle

CR, § 7-304: Obtaining telephone records without authorization

CR, § 7-308: Prohibited transfer of recorded sounds or images (penalty contained in CR, § 7-309)

CR, § 8-103: Obtaining property or services by bad check (less than \$100 and at least \$100 but less than \$1,500)

CR, § 8-206: Misdemeanor credit card crimes (less than \$100 and at least \$100 but less than \$1,500)

CR, § 8-401: Fraudulent conversion of partnership assets

CR, § 8-402: Fraudulent misrepresentation by corporate officer or agent

CR, § 8-404: Pyramid promotional schemes

CR, § 8-406: Misuse of documents of title

CR, § 8-408: Unlawful subleasing of motor vehicle

CR, § 8-503: Public assistance fraud – generally

CR, § 8-521: Fraudulently obtaining legal representation from the Office of the Public Defender

CR, § 8-523: Housing assistance fraud, making false statements

CR, § 8-904: Racing a horse under a name other than its registered name

CR, § 9-204: Bribing a person participating in or connected with an athletic contest

CR, § 9-205: Acceptance of a bribe by a person participating in or connected with an athletic contest

CR, § 9-503: Making a false statement to a State or local official/agency concerning a crime or hazard

CR, § 9-506: Making a false statement on an application for funds from the Maryland Higher Education Commission

CR, § 10-110: Illegal Dumping and Violation of Litter Control Law

CR, § 10-201: Disturbing the peace and disorderly conduct

CR, § 10-402: Unlawful removing or attempting to remove human remains from burial site

CR, § 10-404: Removal or destruction of funerary objects, graveyard plants, disorderly conduct in graveyards

CR, § 10-502: Bigamy (listed as a misdemeanor but is a felony)

CR, § 11-303: Engaging in prostitution

CR, § 11-306: Procuring or solicitation of prostitution or assignation

CR, § 11-307: Using a building, structure, or conveyance for prostitution or assignation

CR, § 12-102: Betting, wagering, gambling, *etc.*; pool on races/contests

CR, § 12-103: Playing specified games for money (*e.g.*, craps, thimbles, *etc.*)

CR, § 12-104: Keeping a gaming device or a place for gambling

CR, § 12-105: Offshore gambling

CR, § 12-109: Prearrangement or predetermination of horse race results

CR, § 12-203: Holding a lottery or selling a lottery device

CR, § 12-204: Keeping a location for the sale or barter of lottery devices

CR, § 12-205: Importing a lottery device or possession of lottery records or money

CR, § 12-302: Unlawful possession or operation of a slot machine



## Election Law Article

EL, § 13-401: Failure to comply with authority line requirements in campaign material

EL, § 13-602: Specified campaign finance/election-related violations (*e.g.*, providing money/aid or a thing of value to induce or procure a vote, influence by employer of employee's vote, *etc.*)

EL, § 16-201: Voting-related offenses (*e.g.*, impersonation of another in order to vote, voting under a false name, *etc.*)

## Family Law Article

FL, § 4-509: Failure to comply with protective order

## Health General Article

HG, § 18-215: Violations relating to infectious or contagious disease reports

## Housing and Community Development Article

HCD, § 4-411: Making a false statement or report to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for Rental Housing Program loan

HCD, § 4-2005: Making a false statement or report to DHCD for Energy-Efficient Homes Construction Loan Program loan

## Insurance Article (fraudulent insurance acts)

IN, § 27-403: Failure to return premiums, making false or misleading claims to an insurer

IN, § 27-404: Insurer doing business with unlicensed persons

IN, § 27-405: Representations to public by unlicensed persons

IN, § 27-406: False applications and statements; unregulated insurers

IN § 27-406.1: Fraudulent insurance acts of individual sureties

IN, § 27-407: Solicitation of injured persons; solicitation of clients for lawyer or health care practitioner

IN, § 27-407.1: Organizing, planning, or knowingly participating in an intentional motor vehicle accident

IN, § 27-407.2: Compensation for insurance deductible

## Natural Resources Article

NR, § 8-725.4: Speed limits on the Severn River imposed on specified days from April 15, 1989, to October 15, 1989  
NR, § 8-725.5: Noise levels for vessels operated in tidal waters  
NR, § 8-725.6: Speed limit on Seneca Creek  
NR, § 8-725.7: Speed limit on certain areas of Monocacy River  
NR, § 8-726: Throwing or dumping refuse on waters of the State  
NR, § 8-726.1: Throwing specified types of waste on certain waters of the State  
NR, § 8-727.1: Use of flashing red and yellow lights or signal devices  
NR, § 8-738.2: Operating a vessel in a reckless or dangerous manner  
Any prohibited act related to speed limits for personal watercraft

## Public Safety Article

PS, § 5-307: Scope of handgun permit (listed in statute but is not a crime)  
PS, § 5-308: Possession of handgun permit required  
PS, § 6-602: Interference or obstruction of fire marshal, false representation as a fire marshal  
PS, § 7-402: Interference, obstruction of fire or emergency services personnel  
PS, § 14-114: Violation of order, rule, or regulation issued under Maryland Emergency Management Agency Act

## Real Property Article

RP, § 7-318.1: Failure of foreclosure consultant to obtain a real estate broker's license or violation by foreclosure consultant of Maryland Real Estate Brokers Act  
RP, § 7-509: Does not refer to a prohibited act – penalty provision for violations of provisions of Maryland Mortgage Assistance Relief Services Act  
RP, § 10-507: Violation of Custom Home Protection Act (subsection (b)(3))

## State Government Article

SG, § 9-124: Prohibited acts relating to State lottery

## Tax General

TG, § 13-1001: Willful failure to file tax return  
TG, § 13-1004: Income tax preparer – false return, false claim for refund, or attempted tax evasion  
TG, § 13-1007: Violations of income tax withholding requirements  
TG, § 13-1024: Failure to provide information with intent to evade taxes

## Common Law Offenses

Affray  
Battery  
Criminal contempt  
Hindering a law enforcement officer  
Rioting

## **Felonies Eligible for Expungement**

### Criminal Law Article

CR, § 7-104: General Theft (at least \$1,500)  
CR, § 5-602(2): Possession with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance  
CR, § 6-202(a): Burglary in the first degree – breaking and entering with intent to commit theft  
CR, § 6-203: Burglary in the second degree  
CR, § 6-204: Burglary in the third degree

An attempt, conspiracy, or solicitation of any offense listed above is also eligible for expungement under CP, § 10-110