

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
Room 101, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401



House Bill 83 - Criminal Procedure – Automatic Expungement – Possession of Marijuana - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee members,

Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC), an advocacy organization that mobilizes community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs and anti- sex worker policies, supports House Bill 83 (Criminal Procedure – Automatic Expungement – Possession of Marijuana.)

This bill will require Maryland courts to initiate expungement of marijuana possession charges without the filing of a petition or payment of a fee by the person who is subject of the records.

Considering possession of marijuana was decriminalized in 2014, this proposal to automatically expunge the records of those previously charged with possession is long overdue. This policy change is needed now, especially in the wake of the harmful war on drugs that has targeted and encumbered innumerable Black and impoverished Marylanders with non-violent cannabis-related charges for decades. **The burdensome administrative process to expunge one’s record effectively saddles many Marylanders with a criminal record**, despite changes in Maryland law to reduce or eliminate certain criminal charges. People who have had traumatic interactions with the judicial system are even less likely to approach a court to complete this process, creating more inequity in who the system serves to protect.

Automatic expungement is a fairer process and will help address the injustice of the application of marijuana possession criminal penalties.

BHRC respectfully requests the Committee give this measure a **favorable report**. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about BHRC or this position, please contact Tricia Christensen at Tricia@BaltimoreHarmReduction.org.