



MDMJ  
410 Camden Court  
Salisbury, MD 21801



phone 720 607 8369  
email info@MDMJ.org  
twitter @MDMJ2018



January 28, 2020

Statement by Kris Furnish, Executive Director, Maryland Marijuana Justice in support of HB0083

Automatic Expungement is necessary because legalization and the end of cannabis prohibition is inevitable.

Not allowing for expungement is a form of oppression because when convicted, you will have great difficulty getting a job, and when you can't get a job you'll be poor, and when you're poor you may sell drugs to feed yourself and your family, and if you sell drugs you will go to jail.

When Cannabis is legalized it will prove that it never should have been criminalized. We don't have to deal with a complicated process. It's a simple thing to do. Look at Illinois. 700,000 — that's the number of low-level cannabis records officials say could be wiped out under a piece of Illinois' new marijuana law that aims to reduce the effects of the war on drugs. Think of how that will help lower the unemployment rate.

We do not want Maryland to be left behind or make mistakes like in Massachusetts where we are learning they should have Automatically Expunged the nonviolent cannabis convictions at least for small amounts and to only have a process if it's for a larger amount. Maybe at that point, for larger amounts, or for distribution someone might need to see a judge. But simple possessions should be taken off of records automatically because we are planning to legalize this plant.

Automatic expungement is the right thing to do, both from a fairness and from a systems perspective, and it will work significant positive change for hundreds of thousands of Marylanders statewide. It will bring Maryland in line with other states, and provide vital workplace protections so that individuals are no longer stigmatized by past convictions — convictions that in all too many cases resulted from selective arrest and prosecution, and as a result are borne much, much more heavily by people of color.

Expungement of nonviolent cannabis convictions is a path back to work. It means they can drive, feed their families, get an apartment, and much more. Expungement could help solve the homeless problem in Maryland.

Automatic expungement is necessary because many people with nonviolent cannabis convictions don't even know why they can't get a job or apartment. Some do not know why they are being held back and do not have the capacity or physical ability to follow a process that is complicated, expensive and unattainable to the average person that it actually effects.

