

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 1030:**

**Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Karen Friedman

DATE: March 5th, 2024

I am here today in my personal capacity – as an individual who sat as the expungement judge for Baltimore City for many years. I am taking personal leave from my current position because of how important this issue is to me and how strongly I care about this bill passing.

To many, this is a theoretical conversation without any connection to the implications of receiving or not receiving an expungement. But when you are a judge and have the individual who this affects in a very practical way standing 5 feet away from you, the theoretical becomes very real. You see the look in the person's eyes, you hear the desperation in his or her voice, and you witness the confusion that sets in when they realize that although they truly believed our society told them if they did right, cleaned up their act, started living life like the rest of us, we, society, will forgive, and allow them to achieve. Yet here they are weighed down with an albatross, sometimes from years and years ago, that the law won't allow them to shake. They can't get a bank loan, serve on a jury, or get a business license; more importantly, they can't regain their name.

We live in a world where you can't even go on a first date without the other party googling you and knowing everything – all your misdeeds. For some people getting an expungement can be about regaining their name and dignity.

Allowing a judge to truly look at the individual in front of them, and analyze where they are in terms of their growth, how far they have come from where they started, and how much they need that expungement, is so necessary- it is crucial. A judge can look at a person holistically and truly assess, not in theory but in reality, the collective accomplishments of that individual and whether or not he has earned true forgiveness. Give your judges the discretion to make these case-by-case decisions.

We say we are a country that believes in second chances – but are we?? We need to allow people to REINTEGRATE, not just REENTER- the expungement is one of the essential tools to make that happen; I strongly support the passing of the good cause clause.