



February 20, 2024

**Support– House Bill 658 (Moon, Bartlett, Crutchfield, and Williams)
and Senate Bill 602 (McKay, Muse, Sydnor, Smith, Kelly, Waldstreicher, West, and Carter)
Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement, Waiting Periods, and Adverse Actions (Clean Slate Act of 2024)**

Flagger Force supports H.B. 658 and S.B. 602

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

As the Workforce Development and Public Affairs Manager of Flagger Force, I write to you in support of HB.658 and SB.602 - Clean Slate Act. These bills are common-sense legislation that will expand Maryland's workforce, diversify the talent pool, and provide meaningful career opportunities to thousands for whom criminal records pose a barrier to employment.

Flagger Force is a leading traffic control company, providing services throughout the eastern United States. We work to keep our communities moving, not only by directing the flow of traffic for our clients but also through job creation and offering career development. We support Clean Slate legislation in Maryland because we believe everyone deserves the dignity of work. We have witnessed firsthand the impact fair-chance employment can have on the lives of individuals, families, communities, and the economy. Approximately one million people, or 22% of Maryland's adult population, have some form of criminal record. While an estimated 410,000 of those Marylanders are currently eligible to have their records cleared, the existing petition-based system is a bureaucratic maze. The costly, complex, and time-consuming process means our neighbors are denied the relief and economic opportunities they deserve. Voting for automatic record clearing is a vote to give our communities a fresh start – and a clean slate.

We cannot overstate the effects of fair chance hiring and the access to opportunities it leads to for those with criminal records. Formerly incarcerated individuals face over [40,000 barriers](#) to meaningful re-entry, and formerly incarcerated individuals are unemployed at a rate of over 27%. For a point of reference, the peak unemployment rate during the COVID-19 pandemic was 13%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. With nearly [nine in ten employers](#), [four in five landlords](#), and [three in five colleges](#) still using background checks to screen applicants' criminal records, the obstacles associated with an old criminal record can last a lifetime. Once an individual has paid their debt to society, they should be able to rejoin their community freely without their past continuing to create obstacles and roadblocks to a quality life.

Not only would Clean Slate have immediate economic benefits – it would also contribute to public safety. Individuals who had their records cleared are [less likely to commit a new offense](#) than the general population. By helping deserving Marylanders rejoin the workforce, Clean Slate will significantly reduce recidivism, making our communities stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

Flagger Force is proud to employ 380 Marylanders – including individuals with old criminal records. Working towards a more equitable and inclusive future means giving people a real chance. By doing so, we will

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undoubtedly strengthen the workforce, the economy, and communities across Maryland. Flagger Force strongly supports Clean Slate in Maryland, and I urge the Committee to approve this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Shea Zwerver

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