

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. I am a resident of District 45 (Cory McCray, Jackie Addison, Caylin Young and Stephanie Smith). I am testifying in **support of HB0499 - Criminal Records - Expungement and Maryland Judiciary Case Search (Expungement Reform Act of 2025)**.

In 2022, the Court of Special Appeals ruled that any probation violation means a conviction is indefinitely ineligible for expungement, (based on a legal interpretation that a violation means that the individual has not “satisfactorily completed the sentence.”) This is so regardless of the nature of the violation. This creates a problem that prevents people who violated their probation from ever getting their conviction expunged.

As a a priory convicted (for non-violent drug charges) felon, I am a firm believer the ability of people to heal and change and to benefit from a second chance. We need to foster more opportunities for citizens who have paid their debt to successfully reintegrate back into society. This not only helps the individual, but also our communities, the economy and the State of Maryland. When a person’s conviction is ineligible for expungement, the record of the conviction can have devastating consequences.

Potential consequences include being unable to rent an apartment, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of one’s children, access some government services, or vote in elections.¹ In short, the potential consequences of unexpunged convictions severely hamper a person’s ability to live a conventional life. Our justice system should instead support people who want to participate fully in society and contribute to their communities. If they cannot get convictions for minor offenses expunged, they face a huge barrier to this participation.

HB0499, sponsored by Governor Moore, would support people petitioning for expungements by lifting the ban on expungements if a probation violation occurred (Abhishek Reform); adding seven (7) common misdemeanors to the expungement eligibility list; and removing all pardoned marijuana charges and 3- year stets from Case Search. These changes to existing expungement law will help ensure that misdemeanors or parole violations do not permanently alter the trajectory of a person’s life. The law will support people in moving on after minor offenses and participating successfully in society.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in support of HB0499 - Criminal Records - Expungement and Maryland Judiciary Case Search (Expungement Reform Act of 2025).

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration. Sincerely,

Zach Morehouse

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¹ The People’s Law Library of Maryland, “Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record,” <https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record>; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, “Expungement” <https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/>

