

March 4, 2025

Testimony on HB 499
Criminal Records - Expungement and Maryland Judiciary Case Search
(Expungement Reform Act of 2025)
Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 499 which would reduce the impact of incarceration by eliminating probation violations as a permanent roadblock to criminal record expungement.

In 2022, the [Court of Special Appeals ruled](#) that any probation violation means a conviction is *indefinitely* ineligible for expungement under a legal interpretation that a violation means that the individual has not “satisfactorily completed the sentence” (regardless of the nature of the violation). Due to this ruling, he and every Marylander with decades-old misdemeanors have no access to expungements, impacting their ability to secure employment, housing, education, occupational licensing, and financing, even though he was violated for cannabis possession which, since legalization, has brought [\\$700 million to the state in just one year](#).

Since this ruling, the Maryland General Assembly passed the [REDEEM Act](#), which cuts the criminal record expungement waiting period in half. This allows millions of Marylanders to seek relief sooner, only to discover that they are still barred due to the Abhishek ruling.

HB 499 seeks to resolve this by altering the expungement criteria to be accessible at “the time when a sentence has expired, including any period of probation, parole, or mandatory supervision,” removing the term “satisfies” and “satisfactorily” from the expungement statutes. This means that once a person has served the entire sentence *and* finished the additional 5-10-year waiting period, they will be eligible for expungement *if* the charge is eligible. The State’s Attorney’s Office and the victim still retain the right to object to the expungement in accordance with [Criminal Procedure §10–110 f\(1\)](#), leaving the courts to make the final decision as to whether or not the expungement is in the interest of justice as opposed to a blanket ban on all violations. The bill also expands the expungement list by adding several misdemeanors and removes *all* cannabis convictions from Case Search.

We see this as a rational and balanced approach to ensuring that the [estimated 25% of working-age Marylanders with a record](#) (pg.33) can receive the expungements necessary to allow them to reacclimate into society properly. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.