



Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony in Support of House Bill 499

**Criminal Records – Expungement and Maryland Judiciary Case Search
(Expungement Reform Act of 2025)**

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: March 4, 2025

POSITION: Favorable

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports House Bill 499, which alters procedures for waiting periods for expungement filings, and expands the number of individuals eligible for expungement.**

The number of Americans with a criminal history is on the rise. More than one-third of the adult working-age population has a criminal record. According to the National Employment Law Project, 1 in 3 Americans (70 million) have an arrest record that will appear in a routine criminal background check in hiring. Nearly 1 million Marylanders struggle to secure employment with a criminal record. This challenge falls disproportionately on black and brown communities, the poor, and the homeless. Criminal records can serve as both the cause and consequence of poverty. Workers and job seekers with a criminal background apply for jobs for which they are well qualified, but are not considered due to criminal records. Technological advances have made access to criminal background information easier, which creates often insurmountable barriers to obtaining employment, housing, education, and other critical resources.

In an era of rising child care costs, ballooning health care costs, the ever increasing housing and rental markets, and prohibitively expensive costs of higher education, having a well-paying job is a necessity. The days where financial freedom was accessible to a significant portion of Marylanders is long gone, and the percentage of Marylanders who can hope for even short term financial security is dwindling. Taking away the ability of Marylanders to access gainful employment will exacerbate every single issue that Maryland is struggling with, especially homelessness and public safety. When Marylanders cannot support themselves the only outcome is the deterioration of its people and the state as a whole. This is not a potential outcome; this is an inevitability.

Current law prohibits people with criminal records from expungement if their probation was closed “unsatisfactorily.” This ruling applies to thousands of Marylanders, many of whom would be included for mere technical violations of probation that have no bearing on their original crime. Thousands of Marylanders now have their economic and employment potential permanently capped. HB 499 would change this by making the common sense change of allowing expungements for people who have completed their sentence.

For these reasons, JOTF supports House Bill 499 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

Kam Bridges / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org