



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 811

Criminal Procedure - Automatic Expungement -

To: Chairman Will C. Smith, Jr. and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Nicole Hanson-Mundell, Out For Justice. Inc.
Date: 3/5/2020

Greetings Judicial Proceedings Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to write in strong support of Senate Bill 811. My name is Nicole Hanson-Mundell and I am the Executive Director of Out For Justice, a returning citizen and member-led nonprofit organization. Our mission is to engage, educate, and empower individuals with criminal records in Maryland to create structural change through legislation, policy reform and advocacy. We regularly confront the stigma and collateral consequences that come with possessing a criminal record.

Nationally, almost one in three individuals has some sort of criminal record. Many records include situations where charges were dropped or the individual was found not-guilty. However, about half of the records in the FBI database contain no information about case disposition, meaning that a background check or internet search of someone who was never convicted of anything could produce a misleading arrest record for a serious crime with no other details. This impacts a lot of Marylanders, as 73,000 cases were dropped in 2014 alone. Currently, those who had charges dropped, a PPJ, invalidated warrants etc or were found not guilty still have to wait 3 years to clear their record. This is unjust and puts these innocent individuals at a huge disadvantage in the job market.

In Maryland, there are over 10,000 collateral consequences of a criminal record, impacting employment; government loans, grants and benefits; housing; judicial rights; education; civic participation; and more. A criminal record is a huge barrier to financial and emotional wellbeing. Automatic Expungement with no fees attached allows individuals to make a first impression on a potential employer, landlord, or institution without the stigma of having to explain their record. This isn't letting people get away with crimes - this is giving Marylanders the deserving chance they need to be positive and productive citizens. How can we expect people to choose the right path if policy makers aren't willing to treat them fairly by passing legislation that automatic expungement of non-convictions. Hundreds of thousands of Marylanders need this bill in order to move on with support their families, and contribute to our state's economy as members of the workforce. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of SB 811 to ensure that hundreds of thousands of impacted Marylanders are able to access employment.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nicole Hanson-Mundell