

House Bill 1343 Oral Testimony
March 10, 2020

My name is Jacob Martz, and I live in Sharpsburg, MD. I came here to testify today because this is a matter of great personal importance to me, and many others. I urge you to please vote positively on House Bill 1343, as it will have a profound impact on the lives of a countless number of Maryland citizens.

Like many other people, I did some foolish things in my youth. I have two misdemeanors on my record, one from 2001 and one from 2005. There was no victim, and I served no jail time as a result of either conviction. My Probation Officer even testified on my behalf to have my probation terminated early, which was granted.

Since my last encounter with the law 15 years ago, I've become a professional contractor and carpenter. I returned to school at the University of Maryland in 2011 and, balancing school and a full time job, graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2018, with a 3.98 GPA and degrees in Cybersecurity and History. During that same time, from 2013-2016, I also became an instrument rated Private Pilot – my proudest accomplishment to date. I volunteer regularly with the National Park Service, assisting with preservation activities and conducting historical lectures at surrounding Civil War battlefields and for school groups. Last May, I was appointed to the Zoning Board of my town by the Mayor of Sharpsburg. I serve in a volunteer capacity on several town committees, and just yesterday was asked by the Vice Mayor to fill a vacancy on our Town Council, a duty that I will accept. I have done everything I can to redeem myself, my character, my honor and my integrity.

Despite these facts, however, I am still labeled a criminal for life by the State. No matter what title or accolade is obtained, or how much success is accomplished personally or professionally, the most prominent title will always be that of criminal as long as these unnecessary records are maintained.

I understand the inherent need to maintain records on the most severe crimes, particularly those of a violent nature, however many of us who have a criminal record realize that these were anomalous mistakes in our lives; that we are, in essence, good people, who don't deserve to have our futures ruined by mistakes made, in some cases, many years in the past. I mentioned that I

have a degree in Cybersecurity; however, since most of those jobs require a clearance, my 15-plus year old record will most likely prevent me from doing that as well.

It is estimated that 1 in 3 Americans has a criminal record, most for low-level misdemeanors. What benefit exists in keeping the records of such people public, if not for the sole purpose of punishment, shame, and limitation of opportunity, long after their debt to society has been repaid? Creating a permanent record of one's past, essentially labeling them a criminal for life, does not incentivize anyone to follow the law or be a better person, but the hope for a second chance does. According to two studies conducted by the Universities of California and Michigan, people who receive expungements have an extremely low recidivism rate, while experiencing "a significant increase in employment and average wages." By maintaining these records, it ensures that the repercussions of even minor crimes will last a lifetime, and one should not have to serve a life sentence for a crime that does not warrant it. Seeking expungement of foolish mistakes, in and of itself, is a demonstration of concern for one's future and regard for the law, and evidence of a desire to be considered once again as a decent, law-abiding person with integrity.

If our justice system truly is about rehabilitation, then people who have demonstrated the ability to be law-abiding citizens should be given the opportunity for a second chance, not labeled a criminal for life.

Thank you very much for your time.