

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 960:

### **Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Modifications**

TO: Hon. Will Smith, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Christopher Dews, Senior Policy Advocate

DATE: March 17th, 2022

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-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. We support Senate Bill 960 as a means of reducing the impact of incarceration and enhancing employment opportunities for lower-income workers and job seekers throughout the state.

A criminal record can be both the cause and consequence of poverty and has detrimental effects on the employment prospects for the 25% of working-age Marylanders with a record. Maryland has an expansive list of misdemeanor offenses and waiting periods that needlessly penalize individuals long after they have served their time. Maryland has drastically longer waiting periods for expungement than most other states in the nation. According to a [recently released report](#) from Collateral Consequences Resource Center (CCRC), 42 other states have shorter waiting periods for misdemeanor expungement, including Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Utah.

[Maryland Code Ann., Criminal Procedure §10–110](#) states that an individual must wait **10 years** before they are eligible to expunge most *nonviolent* misdemeanor convictions from their record. The waiting period kicks in *after* they have completed their entire sentence, parole or probation, drug treatment, *and* any mandatory supervision. In most instances, the waiting periods are *far* longer than the actual sentence, leaving individuals released from incarceration with barriers to education, employment, housing, public assistance, occupational licensing, and much more.

Senate Bill 960 seeks to reduce the expungement waiting periods for offenses related to the Natural Resources Statutes, reducing them from 10 years to 3-5 years depending on the nature and number of violations of the offense. Passing this will allow a large number of fishermen to continue their businesses and reduce barriers to employment, education, licensing, and even family gatherings for others who made very minor or negligible mistakes in their past. We urge a **favorable** report.