



SB138 – SUPPORT

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Senate Bill 0138 – SUPPORT

Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Expansion

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee — Feb. 1, 2022 at 1pm

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Holly Syrrakos and I represent Takoma Park Mobilization, an advocacy organization with a following of over 2,500, active in environmental, justice, economic, and electoral matters. **We are in SUPPORT of SB138.**

This bill will expand the scope of automatic expungements of certain police and court records to include cases resolved through probation before judgment and stet, if all court-ordered provisions have been satisfied.

Expunging records of people charged with low-level offenses will help affected people qualify for housing, loans, government assistance and jobs. People whose cases are resolved through probation before judgment and stet are not convicted of crimes and a police record generally makes life harder for them and for the families who depend upon them.

In the name of justice, we must clear people of unimportant criminal records. Maryland has for too long penalized people for being poor, creating *de facto* debtors' prisons and trapping many in a vicious cycle where the smallest interaction with the criminal justice system becomes a life sentence. Twenty-four percent of female-headed households in Maryland have income below the poverty line. Removing barriers for men and women that prevent them from supporting their families will help to end the cycle of poverty.

Policies and practices that penalize poverty disproportionately affect people of color. Maryland's Black population accounts for 30%, but 70+% of the state prison population. Latinos account for 4% of the population, and 10% of the prison population. There is every reason to believe that the same kind of bias exists in charging low-level offenses.

Automatically removing obstacles to providing for one's self and one's family is a critical piece of building an equitable society. Legislators can make residents lives easier or more difficult—we urge you to end policies that create undue burdens.

We ask for your support for SB0138 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Thank you.