

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice and the Job Opportunities Task Force. I am a resident of MD District. I am a resident of **District 40. I am testifying in support of SB138.**



I've seen first-hand employers with little to no legal training jump into Case Search when looking at new applications to decide whether a candidate should be hired. They were not adept enough to do anything, but read the charges against the person, let alone make a nuanced decision based on how long ago charges were filed and what the myriad of dispositions mean in the context of their labor needs.

At the same time, I have family who have struggled to attain jobs and professional degrees as a result of a criminal record. I know from their experience that their effort to move past these records have caused pain, frustration, and unnecessary disappointment as they have tried to move on from the very real and traumatic impact of the criminal justice system. While I personally believe expungement is important regardless of disposition, I believe it is especially heinous to allow bureaucratic inertia to preclude us from freeing those who were never found guilty of a crime from the administrative shackles their records put on their lives.

Last year, legislation was passed to provide automatic expungement for thousands of Marylanders whose charges were not prosecuted, acquitted, dropped, or were found not guilty. This bill would only take effect starting 2024, yet thousands of folks need immediate relief from the barriers that a criminal record puts on attaining a job and housing. Additionally, an important group of dispositions aren't automatically expungable, despite not being findings of guilt: stets and probations before judgment that satisfy court-ordered conditions. **SB138 would speed up the implementation of this bill, so that folks can benefit from it right now and expand eligibility to dispositions of stet and probation before judgment.**

We are in unprecedented times right now, where supply shortages have caused drops in housing stock and impacted the make-up of employment in Maryland and beyond. As a result, the presence of a criminal record can significantly alter the opportunities available for people to find secure housing and financial security for themselves and their families. Maryland's commitment to reducing these barriers by making automatic expungement an upcoming reality shows a belief by lawmakers that criminal records for non-guilty verdicts shouldn't be the thing that denies someone an opportunity to live and work fairly and freely.

This bill honors that commitment, by recognizing we cannot wait for it to be a reality and that we must rid the bill of the loopholes that still unfairly punish folks with stets and probations before judgements that satisfy all court-ordered conditions.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in **support of SB138.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan Smeton  
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore