



March 1, 2024

Re: HB.658/SB.602: Automated Expungement, Waiting Periods, and Adverse Actions (Clean Slate Act of 2024)

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice (RBIJ) is an award-winning international nonprofit that works with companies to champion solutions that promote public safety, deliver justice, and strengthen communities. Since our founding, RBIJ has worked with companies of all sizes in two dozen states to advocate for common-sense policy solutions to expand the workforce and improve the economy. We stand in strong support of passing Clean Slate Maryland (HB.658/SB.602) in order to give deserving individuals across the state the second chance they have earned.

A criminal record poses an enormous obstacle to a person's employment, housing, occupational licensing, and educational prospects. The weight is borne not just by individuals but by their children and families as well. The obstacles to employment are particularly onerous: nine in ten employers currently use background checks to screen applicants, and having a record – even an extremely old record – reduces an otherwise-qualified job seeker's chance of getting a callback by nearly 50 percent. Those record clearing processes that do exist are complicated, burdensome, and seldom accessed. Nationally, less than ten percent of eligible individuals receive the clearance to which they are entitled. The result is costly to businesses and communities alike.

Clean Slate legislation in Maryland would remove these barriers – and businesses across Maryland would benefit. Passing automatic record clearing will help employers access a diverse, loyal, and underutilized talent pool to bolster the labor market. Despite record-low unemployment, businesses across Maryland are still struggling to fill thousands of open jobs. According to a recent poll conducted by Small Business Majority, 84% of small business owners agree that Clean Slate policies will open up a pool of applicants that have earned a second chance. These bills would ease the burden for companies that are desperately trying to hire. Clean Slate is an opportunity for job growth that Maryland cannot afford to pass up.

Passage of these bills would significantly strengthen Maryland's economy. Estimates indicate that the underemployment of people with records costs the United States more than \$80 billion in lost productivity. A study in Michigan found that automatic record clearing increases wages by more than 20 percent within one year alone. That's more money in the pockets of consumers and back into local businesses. Removing barriers to

The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice is the collective name for RBIJ UK (a non-profit community interest company (company number: 12100724)) and RBIJ USA (a fiscally sponsored project of NEO).

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employment reduces the need for government assistance, saving taxpayer dollars and increasing prosperity.

And if the jobs and economic growth potential isn't reason enough to support Clean Slate, the benefit to public safety is key. One of the most important factors in whether someone will reoffend is their employment status. By expanding the pool of talent businesses can recruit into long-term, sustaining jobs, Clean Slate will reduce recidivism. By making Maryland a safer place to live and work, we can continue to attract new talent, new employers, and new investments.

There is a reason Clean Slate enjoys support from multinational corporations, mid-size companies, small businesses, and Chambers of Commerce across the country. They have seen the benefits of automatic record clearing on the communities where they live and operate, as well as on their bottom line. RBIJ stands in strong support of passing Clean Slate. Maryland needs legislation that meets the needs of its workers and its businesses – and HB.658/SB.602 does just that. It is imperative that the legislature take this opportunity to pass these common-sense measures.

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