



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

Anne Bocchini Kirsch
Director of Advocacy, PREPARE
anne@prepare-parole.org
(410) 994-6136

HBO658 - Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement, Waiting Periods, and Adverse Actions (Clean Slate Act of 2024) - SUPPORT

Criminal background checks are a barrier to employment, housing, education, insurance, and even vacationing. As an organization that works with people who are returning to the community, I have seen friends and clients turned away from affordable housing and denied living wage jobs on the basis of a background check, which then makes it difficult to access important services like transportation and healthcare.

Ban the box sounds like a great idea, but ban the box doesn't work if the employer or landlord gets to run a background check after the interview. I've had numerous clients and community members make it through an entire interview process with large, supposedly friendly, employers such as John's Hopkins or Amazon only to be turned away when the background check was completed in spite of their initial honesty. I've seen people finally find living wage jobs and build a savings, only to find themselves redlined into low income and high crime areas in spite of their income and good credit.

As more people return to the community, this is becoming a growing problem. As of 2019, almost every other person had a close relative who experienced incarceration.¹ As long as expungements are out of reach for many, the pool of people facing these significant collateral consequences will continue to grow. Currently, even a technical supervision violation - something that carries at most a 15 day sanction under the law - can bar someone from accessing expungements for a lifetime. That means a missed meeting with an agent or an unforeseen change of job or address can saddle someone with housing and employment discrimination for the rest of their life. HBO658 fixes this problem, and I urge a favorable report.

¹ Brigit Katz, Nearly Half of Americans Have a Close Family Member Who Has Been Incarcerated, Smithsonian Magazine, March 6, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nearly-half-americans-have-close-family-member-who-has-been-incarcerated-180971645/>

PREPARE
PO Box 9738 Towson, MD 21284