

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 454/ HOUSE BILL 73

Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Completion of Sentence

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Matt Parsons on behalf of Baltimore Action Legal Team

My name is Matt Parsons, and I am the Community Lawyer of Baltimore Action Legal Team (BALT). BALT supports Senate Bill 454/ House Bill 73 to reduce the impact of incarceration by eliminating probation violations as a permanent roadblock to criminal record expungement. BALT is a legal collective that was founded in response to community calls for legal support during the protests following Freddie Gray's murder. Since 2015 we remain committed to providing legal education and services to our community which help ameliorate the effects of systemic racism.

In 2022, the [Court of Special Appeals ruled](#) that any probation violation means a conviction is *indefinitely* ineligible for expungement under a legal interpretation that a violation means that the individual has not "satisfactorily completed the sentence" (regardless of the nature of the violation). Due to this ruling, he and *every* Marylander with decades-old misdemeanors, have no access to expungements, impacting their ability to secure employment, housing, education, occupational licensing, and financing, even though he was violated for cannabis possession which, since legalization, has brought [\\$700 million to the state in just one year](#).

Since this ruling, the Maryland General Assembly passed the [REDEEM Act](#), which cuts the criminal record expungement waitings in half, allowing millions of Marylanders to seek relief sooner, only to discover that they are still barred due to the Abhishek ruling.

Senate Bill 454/ House Bill 73 seeks to resolve this by altering the expungement criteria to be accessible at "the **time when a sentence has expired**, including any period of probation, parole, or mandatory supervision," removing the term "satisfies" and "satisfactorily" from the expungement statutes. This means that once a person has served the entire sentence *and* finished the additional 5-10-year waiting period, they will be eligible for expungement *if* the charge is eligible. The State's Attorney's Office and the victim still retain the right to object to the expungement in accordance with [Criminal Procedure §10-110 f\(1\)](#), leaving the courts to make the final decision as to whether or not the expungement is in the interest of justice as opposed to a blanket ban on all violations. We see this as a rational and balanced approach to ensuring that the [estimated 25% of working-age Marylanders with a record](#) (pg.33) can receive the expungements necessary to allow them to properly reacclimate into society. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

For these reasons, BALT urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 454/ House Bill 73 from this committee.