

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: **Krystle L. Sanders, Attorney**

Krystle L. Sanders, Volunteer Pro Bono Attorney (Maryland Legal Aid)

Krystle L. Sanders 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.

As a volunteer pro bono attorney, I have participated in several expungement clinics and taken on expungement cases through MLA and MVLS. When coming in contact with clients, almost 100% of them have changed their lives for the better and are striving to make something more of their lives after being saddled with a criminal conviction, whether it be looking for housing or jobs. Most of the convictions are over 10 years old and some of the clients are turned away because while they meet the criteria for expungement they received a violation of probation at some point. The expungement law and the obligation of the legal system have fallen short because of the way the law is written. It currently presents a significant gap in actually allowing citizens of Maryland to thrive and move on. Many of the clients seeking expungement for the eligible offenses once had substance abuse addictions that they've overcome and at the time probation was handed down as a sentence, those addictions were in full effect. That likely means they may not have had stable housing, a job, a phone, food to eat, etc. which are all precursors to violations of probation and/or reoffending just to survive. Seeing the disappointment on their faces when I tell them their case(s) aren't eligible because they incurred a violation of probation 10+ years ago leads me to write to you today in favor of HB73. If we want to move Maryland forward, we have to allow those who have "paid their debts" to be able to redeem themselves in order to be productive members of society and Marylanders.