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SB0649

**Criminal Procedure – Expungement – No Finding and Case Terminated
Without Finding
Judicial Proceedings Committee Hearing
February 12, 2025**

Position: FAVORABLE

To the Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Community Legal Services (CLS) is a nonprofit legal services provider dedicated to ensuring equitable access to justice and due process of law for Maryland’s most under-represented populations. We support passage of 0649, which seeks to expand Maryland’s expungement laws to allow the removal of charges that were not unequivocally disposed of by conviction. As an organization committed to providing free legal services to individuals who would otherwise struggle to access justice, we have seen firsthand how the collateral consequences of unresolved charges can create lasting barriers to employment, housing, and economic stability.

CLS attorneys and volunteers have conducted hundreds of expungements in the past 18 months as part of the State’s efforts to expand the expungement of cannabis-related offenses that were no longer crimes. We have handled more than 700 expungement matters through more than a dozen clinics since 2023 when the law changed. We have 30 volunteers who are trained in expungement law and procedure, and many of them have participated in our events. We have seen many, many positive impacts for the clients we have helped. However, we have had to give disappointing advice for many people for whom the disposition of an offense is not clearly stated.

This Bill Addresses a Barrier to Expungement of Eligible Charges

Under current law, individuals with charges that result in a no finding disposition or cases that are terminated without a finding may still find these records appearing in background checks. Even though these cases did not result in a conviction, their mere presence can prevent individuals from securing jobs, renting homes, or pursuing educational opportunities. Senate Bill 0649 recognizes this unfair burden and takes a necessary step toward ensuring that Marylanders are not penalized for cases that did not result in a definitive guilty finding.

At CLS, we frequently assist clients who face rejection from potential employers or landlords due to the existence of unresolved or unclear case dispositions on their record. Many of these individuals are hardworking, law-abiding citizens seeking a fresh start but are hindered by bureaucratic inconsistencies that allow non-convictions to remain accessible to the public. The inability to expunge these records runs counter to the fundamental principle of fairness in our justice system.

This bill aligns with Maryland's broader commitment to criminal justice reform by ensuring that individuals are not indefinitely burdened by cases that did not result in conviction. Expanding expungement eligibility to include charges with a no finding disposition or cases that were terminated without a finding will help eliminate unnecessary obstacles and promote rehabilitation, reintegration, and economic self-sufficiency.

We Respectfully Request a Favorable Report

For these reasons noted above, Community Legal Services respectfully asks the committee to **issue a favorable report on SB0649**. Please feel free to reach out to Jessica Quincosa, Executive Director, or Lisa Sarro, Director of Litigation & Advocacy, with any questions at quincosa@clspgc.org, and sarro@clspgc.org, respectively.