



House Bill 0055

Criminal Procedure — Expungement of Records — Good Cause

In the House Judiciary Committee

Committee Hearing on March 4, 2025

Position: FAVORABLE

As Chief Policy Officer for REFORM Alliance, I write on behalf of my organization in support of Good Cause Expungement. REFORM Alliance is dedicated to transforming probation and parole systems across the United States by implementing evidence-based reforms that reduce recidivism, promote rehabilitation, and ensure public safety. To date, we have passed 18 bipartisan bills in 11 states, creating pathways for over 850,000 people to exit the system.

House Bill 55 authorizes individuals to file a petition for expungement. This petition will allow for the court to exercise judicial discretion and grant a petition for expungement at any point after the completion of an individual's sentence on a showing of good cause. A good cause determination in the bill is based on the nature of the crime, rehabilitation of the person, the risk to public safety, and the impact of the conviction on an individual's successful re-entry into their community. Successful reentry is seen as an individual's ability to secure employment, education, housing, public assistance, licensing, and opportunities for economic stability.¹ Currently, in Maryland, most charges (~93%) are *not* eligible for expungement, leaving individuals released from incarceration with barriers to education, employment, housing, public assistance, occupational licensing, and much more. Expanding opportunities for expungement provides a clearer path forward, strengthening our commitment to Marylanders deserving of a second chance whose past mistakes do not have to define their future.

Individuals with involvement in the criminal legal system often encounter significant, long-term barriers to employment, including earning lower wages or even difficulty attaining steady employment. The unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated individuals is five times greater than the national unemployment rate, and higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period, including the Great Depression.² Moreover, employers are over 50 percent less likely to hire justice-impacted individuals than comparable job applicants without a criminal record.³ Given that stable employment plays a crucial role in reducing recidivism, it is essential that we remove unnecessary obstacles hindering successful reintegration. Research shows that returning community members who maintain stable employment both after incarceration are 61% less likely to recidivate than those who

¹ HB055 (2025)

² Couloute, L. & Kopf, D. (2018). [Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people](#). Prison Policy Institute


³ [Overlooked and Undervalued: Ex-Offenders in the Employment Market](#)

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continue to lack stable employment.⁴ Allowing individuals to file a petition for expungement of their criminal records and granting courts the discretion to exercise judicial judgment helps address these challenges by reducing societal stigma and increasing opportunities for economic stability, ultimately leading to lower recidivism rates.⁵

Furthermore, the possibility of expungement in HB55 can be a powerful incentive for individuals serving a term of community supervision and/or throughout their reentry process. Knowing that expungement is an attainable reality upon demonstrating rehabilitation can motivate individuals to actively engage in personal development. By fostering an environment where individuals are rewarded for their efforts to reintegrate successfully, HB55 not only benefits justice-impacted individuals but also strengthens communities as a whole. Increased participation in rehabilitation programs leads to higher employment rates, reduced reliance on public assistance, and lower crime rates, ultimately contributing to public safety and economic growth.

For all the reasons listed above, I urge the committee to vote YES on HB55.



/s/

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REFORM Alliance
Chief Policy Officer

⁴ Kolbeck, S., Lopez, S., & Bellair, P. (2023). [Does stable employment after prison reduce recidivism irrespective of prior employment and offending?](#) *Justice Quarterly*.

⁵ Kolbeck, S., Lopez, S., & Bellair, P. (2023). [Does stable employment after prison reduce recidivism irrespective of prior employment and offending?](#) *Justice Quarterly*.