

Dear Chair Clippinger and the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jaquan Bond and I am a resident of District 6. I am writing in support of HB 55, the Good Cause Expungement. Current law states that courts may grant a petition for expungement on a showing of good cause if the charges resulted in a non-conviction, probation before judgment, stet, or the charge was vacated. The proposed legislation seeks to expand the court's good cause expungement power to misdemeanors or felonies it deems worthy of expungement.

When I was 27, I was arrested for drug possession. I was the only black person living in a house with white roommates who were all from Hagerstown Maryland and they were all arrested for the same thing as me. Because they were able to afford top attorneys, and I could only use a public defender, I was forced to plea to avoid a significant amount of time in prison. The justice system is not color blind and expungements are an important way to fix decades of discrimination. While I was able to benefit from expungements because my charge was eligible, if the police had me charged with something else my record might have been permanently affected. That's why I believe in Good Cause expungement.

It will be a challenge (and a huge-time investment) for the legislature to decide every single conviction that should be expungable. This bill proposes a common-sense solution: let the judges who levy the sentence decide whether it should be expunged once a person has served their time.

I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Jaquan