

Friday, February 28, 2025



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with Out for Justice, which advocates for the reform of policies and practices that adversely affect incarcerated people's successful reintegration into society. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying in **support of HB0055: Good Cause Expungement**.

Long after the incidents they document, criminal records often stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, keeping custody of children, gaining admission to or paying for college, accessing public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections. This severely limits previously incarcerated people's abilities to lead fulfilling, productive, and law-abiding lives, which is deeply harmful to them, their communities, and Maryland as a whole.

Appropriately, Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years. This demonstrates recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when citizens are rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and are no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that do not reflect who they are now and who they can become.

Even under our state's broader expungement laws, however, there are people left behind whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law and who the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is "good cause" to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to society to transition successfully back into the community and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to support HB0055: Good Cause Expungement.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Katherine Blaha
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