



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Bill Title: HB0055 Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: House Judiciary Committee

From: Erica Puentes, Progressive Maryland Legislative Coordinator on behalf of Progressive Maryland

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Committee,

Progressive Maryland is pleased to offer **a favorable testimony in strong support of HB 0055 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause**. Progressive Maryland is a member based organization led by and focused on working class, Black, and brown communities. Our grassroots advocacy focuses include racial justice and economic justice with the aim of building a more just and equitable Maryland. We have over 125,000 members and supporters across the state, with significant bases in Baltimore City, Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, Harford counties, and the Eastern Shore.

Passage of HB 0055 would create an opportunity for persons with misdemeanor or felony convictions to petition for expungement. Having a criminal history should not stain a person for life; sadly, the criminal justice system has often worked to make it so. Individuals with a criminal record often have difficulties securing employment, housing and education opportunities. Additionally, they often battle the social stigma of having a record which negatively affects their relationships and emotional wellbeing. These combined negative impacts often trap individuals in a cycle of incarceration disrupting their rehabilitation and preventing any meaningful form of justice. Persons who have completed their sentence, parole, probation, and any other form of mandatory treatment associated with the conviction should be given the opportunity to move forward and live a productive life.

Progressive Maryland supports HB 0055 because the justice system should not continue to punish these individuals who have successfully completed their requirements and shown that they have taken personal accountability. Instead, the justice system should acknowledge their efforts to transform their lives and support them in making amends and reintegrating themselves into society. Furthermore, as an organization with core anti-racist values, we stand against all forms of exploitation. We recognize that the carceral system is deeply intertwined with racial oppression as mass incarceration has historically and continues to target Black and brown communities across the nation. National and state data shows that Black individuals are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and often experience higher rates of unemployment. As a result HB0055 would likely positively impact Black individuals to a greater extent as these individuals are incarcerated at disproportionately high rates in Maryland.

Progressive Maryland asserts every human being's right to live a worthy and dignified life - for this and many reasons we urge **the committee to provide a favorable report on HB0055**.