

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



351 Dubois Rd, Annapolis, MD 21401

Written Testimony in Support of: HB 0055 Expungement of Records, Good Cause

Dear Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write to you today on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy organization that believes in second chances and in the fundamental fairness of our justice system, submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 0055. Imagine a young man named David. At 19, he made a mistake—one that resulted in a felony conviction. He served his time, completed probation, and spent years working to rebuild his life. He went back to school, found steady employment, and became a mentor in his community. Yet, every job application, every housing opportunity, and even his ability to volunteer at his child's school was met with the same roadblock: his record.

House Bill 55 is about people like David—people who have paid their debt to society and proven that they are more than their past mistakes. This bill would allow individuals who have completed their sentence, parole, probation, or required treatment to petition for expungement of their records. More importantly, it would give courts the discretion to grant these petitions when there is good cause—recognizing that justice is not just about punishment, but also about redemption and second chances.

Under our current laws, thousands of Marylanders who have turned their lives around remain trapped by their past. The rigid waiting periods and limited eligibility criteria mean that too many individuals continue to be judged not for who they are today, but for a single chapter in their lives. This bill acknowledges that people grow, change, and deserve the opportunity to fully participate in society without being haunted by a record that no longer reflects who they are.

We know that expungement works. Studies show that individuals who have their records cleared see significant increases in employment and wages. They become more financially stable, less reliant on social services, and more engaged in their communities. This is not just about criminal justice reform—it's about economic empowerment, stronger families, and safer neighborhoods.

For every David in our state who is ready to move forward, I urge you to issue a **favorable report** on HB 55. Let's ensure that Maryland's justice system reflects our values of fairness, opportunity, and the belief in second chances.

Sincerely,

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The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization of nearly 2000 Marylanders who advocate for sensible evidence-based legislative and policy changes in Maryland's correctional practices. MAJR thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on this legislation and urges a favorable report.