



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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Chair Luke Clippinger
Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 55 (HB 55) Expungement of Records – Good Cause.

This bill allows individuals with misdemeanor or felony convictions to petition for expungement after completing their sentence, parole, probation, and any mandatory treatment. Importantly, it empowers courts to grant expungements at any time upon a showing of good cause, reducing long-term barriers to employment, education, and housing. HB 55 is a critical step forward in advancing justice, particularly for African Americans who are disproportionately impacted by the long-term consequences of criminal records in Maryland. **This bill is a 2025 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly believes that our criminal justice system must prioritize fairness, rehabilitation, and second chances. African Americans in Maryland and across the nation have long faced systemic disparities in the criminal justice system, leading to higher arrest rates, harsher sentences, and long-term barriers to economic stability. A 2023 report by the Prison Policy Initiative found that Black Marylanders are incarcerated at nearly double the rate of white Marylanders, and even after serving their sentences, they face ongoing discrimination in employment, housing, and higher education due to their criminal records. Expungement policies like HB 55 are essential to breaking this cycle by removing outdated records that prevent Black Marylanders from accessing new opportunities.

HB 55 addresses these inequities by allowing individuals to petition for expungement after demonstrating rehabilitation and personal growth. The bill specifically requires courts to consider factors like the nature of the offense, the individual's rehabilitation efforts, their time since conviction, and the impact of the record on their ability to secure employment and housing. According to a 2021 study from the Center for American Progress, individuals with criminal records are nearly 50% less likely to receive a job callback, and this disparity is even greater for Black applicants. Removing these barriers is a key step toward

fostering economic empowerment and reducing recidivism among Black Marylanders.

Additionally, HB 55 ensures that individuals who have successfully reintegrated into society are not forever defined by past mistakes. Research from the Brennan Center for Justice has shown that expungement leads to an average 25% increase in wages within one year, demonstrating the real-life impact of clearing criminal records. By expanding expungement eligibility, this bill provides a pathway for Black Marylanders to access stable jobs, housing, and educational opportunities, which in turn strengthens families and communities.

For Black communities in Maryland, the impact of this bill cannot be overstated. By removing the long-lasting barriers of a criminal record, HB 55 allows thousands of individuals the opportunity to fully participate in society without the stigma of past convictions. The passage of this bill would represent a tangible step toward reversing the damaging effects of systemic over-policing and mass incarceration on Black Marylanders, offering them a meaningful chance at redemption and economic stability.

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports HB 55 and its efforts to reform Maryland's expungement laws. This bill reflects our commitment to a criminal justice system that promotes fairness, accountability, and rehabilitation while also recognizing the systemic racial disparities that continue to affect Black Marylanders. We urge your support for HB 55, as it offers a thoughtful and proactive approach to addressing the harms caused by long-term criminal records and the ongoing challenges faced by Black individuals in securing employment, housing, and economic security.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports House Bill 55.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland