



2601 N HOWARD ST
BALTIMORE, MD 21218
TEL 410) 625-LGBT (5428)
FAX 410) 625-7423
www.freestate-justice.org

Judiciary Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Friday, February 28, 2025

HB0055 – Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of **HB0055**, which seeks to expand expungement opportunities for individuals with criminal convictions, thereby promoting social justice and equity.

HB0055 addresses the significant barriers that criminal records impose on individuals seeking to reintegrate into society. These records often hinder access to employment, housing, education, and public assistance. The LGBTQIA+ community, particularly transgender individuals and people of color, disproportionately face these challenges due to systemic discrimination and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. By allowing petitions for expungement of any misdemeanor or felony conviction upon completion of all sentencing requirements and enabling courts to grant such petitions based on good cause, this bill offers a pathway to reduce recidivism and enhance community stability.

The provisions of **HB0055** are designed to facilitate meaningful reintegration by:

1. **Expanding Eligibility for Expungement:** Allowing individuals to petition for expungement of any misdemeanor or felony conviction after completing their sentence, parole, probation, and mandatory treatment. This inclusiveness acknowledges that all individuals deserve the opportunity to move beyond their past mistakes.
2. **Judicial Discretion Based on Good Cause:** Empowering courts to grant expungement petitions at any time upon a showing of good cause.

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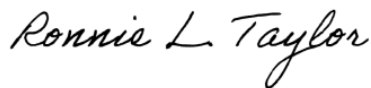
Miller Douglas

Factors for consideration include the nature of the crime, the individual's character and history, successful rehabilitation efforts, time elapsed since conviction, and the impact of the record on securing employment, education, housing, and other opportunities.

3. **Addressing Systemic Inequities:** Recognizing that Black individuals constitute 71% of Maryland's prison population despite representing only 29% of the state's overall population, this bill aims to mitigate the disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on communities of color.
4. **Supporting LGBTQIA+ Individuals:** LGBTQIA+ people, especially transgender women of color, face heightened discrimination and are more likely to engage in criminalized activities due to economic marginalization. Expungement can remove barriers to employment and housing, reducing the need for survival strategies that lead to re-incarceration.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB0055**. This legislation not only addresses critical gaps in our expungement laws but also reinforces Maryland's commitment to equity and inclusion. By providing individuals with the opportunity to clear their records upon demonstrating good cause, we can foster safer, more just communities for all.

Best,



Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [The Effect of Record Expungement on Housing and Education Opportunities | Taylor Waldrop Pribisco](#)
2. [Sealing Criminal Records Benefits Us All - In These Times](#)
3. [Justice in Reentry for Formerly Incarcerated LGBTQ People and People Living With HIV - Center for American Progress](#)
4. [Visualizing the unequal treatment of LGBTQ people in the criminal justice system | Prison Policy Initiative](#)
5. [Survivors Deserve a Clean Slate - Gender Policy Report](#)
6. [Unjust: Life after conviction disproportionately challenging for LGBT people | The Gayly](#)