



**House Bill 0055**  
**Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause**  
**In the Judiciary Committee**  
**Committee Hearing on March 4, 2025**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on House Bill 0055 in response to a request from Delegate Malcolm Ruff.

MLA is a private, nonprofit law firm that provides free legal services to low-income Maryland residents in civil matters. Last year, we advised or represented close to 2,000 clients on expungement matters.

MLA testifies in support of HB 0055. HB 0055 permits a judge to grant expungement for offenses that are not listed in Criminal Procedure Title 10. This bill gives the court discretion to grant an expungement after considering the petitioner's particular circumstances, including the nature of the crime, the person's success at rehabilitation, and the impact of the offense on the person's ability to obtain housing, employment, and other opportunities for economic stability.

HB 0055 allows the judiciary to contemplate the spirit of the expungement law, not just the letter. Expungement is meant to be a tool for redemption, and a good cause provision furthers that goal. MLA clients often come to us with a single conviction that has been on their record for decades. These clients are often models of rehabilitation; they work, they have families, they are pillars of their community, but they have that one offense still on their record. Other MLA clients have charges that are analogous to charges that are eligible for expungement under current law, but do not exactly match, and are therefore excluded completely from expungement. For example, trespassing on posted property is eligible for expungement; but trespassing on private property is not. In another example, a client could not have an open container citation expunged, because the law specifies drinking in public as the expungable offense.

HB 0055 also institutes guard rails to avoid abuse or overuse of the good cause exception. The bill prohibits appeals and limits a person to one good cause request per conviction every five years.

MLA urges passage of HB0055, to expand expungement opportunities for deserving Marylanders.

If you would like additional information on this bill or the underlying issues it addresses, please contact Meaghan McDermott, Maryland Legal Aid's Advocacy Director for Community Lawyering and Development, at [mmcdermott@mdlab.org](mailto:mmcdermott@mdlab.org) or 410-951-7635.