



SB 483 - Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 17, 2026

SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 483. This bill will help eligible people have their records expunged.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Since the passage of the Justice Reinvestment Act in 2016, the Maryland General Assembly has expanded eligibility for expungement. However, fewer than 10% of eligible individuals successfully petition to have their records cleared. This low uptake is likely due to lack of awareness, procedural complexity, filing costs, and court workload. As a result, thousands of Marylanders continue to carry records that legally qualify for expungement — records that limit their access to employment, housing, and financial opportunity.

SB 483 addresses this gap by automating the expungement process for eligible cases. Rather than placing the burden on individuals to navigate a complicated legal system, the bill requires the appropriate state agencies to identify and expunge qualifying records. Importantly, the legislation also seeks to remove digital public access to these charges, ensuring that individuals who qualify for relief can truly move forward.

Automatic expungement promotes economic mobility in several ways:

- **Improves access to employment:** Many employers conduct background checks. Even nonviolent or minor charges can disqualify applicants from living-wage jobs.
- **Expands housing stability:** Rental screenings often rely on publicly available records. Removing eligible charges reduces unnecessary housing denials.
- **Strengthens workforce participation:** When barriers are lifted, more Marylanders can fully engage in the labor market, increasing tax revenue and reducing reliance on public assistance.

SB 483 is a practical step toward strengthening Maryland's workforce and promoting economic mobility. By automating expungement and removing digital access to eligible charges, this bill helps ensure that relief promised under the law becomes relief delivered in practice.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 483.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope