



**Maryland Alliance for  
Sensible Drug Policy**  
LIVED EXPERIENCE. REAL SOLUTIONS.

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Chair Smith,  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: SB483, Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026) – FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the committee:

I'm submitting this testimony in strong support of SB483 on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy, a state-wide grassroots advocacy group led by people with lived or living experience with substance use. We maintain that drug use should be addressed as a public health matter rather than a criminal one, and this legislation represents a significant step toward mitigating the enduring harms experienced by individuals dealing with substance use.

Many of our members have direct experience with the challenges posed by criminal records. We've seen how a record that was eligible for expungement still shows up in background checks for years, costing people job interviews, housing options, and professional opportunities. When relief depends on a complicated petition process, the people who most need a clean slate are often the least able to navigate it.

Currently, Maryland's petition-based expungement system places substantial burdens on individuals trying to put their life back on track. Although the law identifies which offenses are eligible for relief, the requirement that individuals actively file petitions severely limit access. Many people are unaware that they qualify for expungement, and those who do know often lack the financial resources or legal expertise necessary to navigate this system. This means that only a small fraction of eligible Marylanders successfully clear their records through the petition process.

SB 0483 ensures that once individual's case meets the statutory requirements, their records will be automatically expunged. Importantly, SB 0483 does not change which offenses qualify; it simply makes relief automatic once the existing legal

criteria are met. By leveraging the state's digital infrastructure, this legislation reduces the burden on individuals and promotes equitable access to relief without the need for extensive court filings.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 0483.

Respectfully,

James Reece Peak III

Member, Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy