



**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: Senate Bill 525 – Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records –  
Good Cause – FAVORABLE**

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

The Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy is a statewide advocacy organization led by people with lived or living experience with substance use and criminalization. We support SB 525 because it creates something Maryland's expungement system often lacks: a practical path forward for people who have done the work to rebuild their lives, but whose convictions still keep doors closed long after they have completed their sentences.

From lived experience, I can tell you how this plays out. You can finish probation, complete treatment, pay your fines, and stay out of trouble for years. You can become the person the system says it wants you to become. But a conviction that is not eligible for expungement can still shadow every job application, every housing search, and every attempt to move ahead. You keep getting told, in a thousand quiet ways, "Not you. Not yet. Not ever." That's not accountability. That's a permanent punishment.

SB 525 doesn't hand anyone a free pass. It sets waiting periods and requires a court hearing. It allows a person to petition for expungement of any misdemeanor conviction after 5 years and any felony conviction after 7 years, measured from completion of sentence, parole, probation, and any mandatory treatment associated with the conviction. The bill then gives judges discretion to grant relief only on a showing of good cause, and it requires courts to consider common-sense factors like the nature of the crime, the person's history and character, risk to public safety, success at rehabilitation, time since conviction, and the real-world impact of the record on employment, housing, education, public assistance, licensing, and economic stability.

That list matters. It reflects the reality that people are more than their conviction. It also reflects something those of us with records know too well: the “impact” of a record is not theoretical. It is the job you cannot get even when you are qualified. It is the apartment you do not get even when you can pay. It is the training program you are turned away from, or the license that stays out of reach. Those barriers do not just hurt the individual. They destabilize families and communities. They make it harder for people to become the steady, contributing neighbors we all want them to be.

SB 525 is also a public safety bill in the most practical sense. When people can access stable work and housing, they are better able to support their families, stay engaged in treatment or recovery supports if they choose them, and avoid the desperation that can pull someone backward. Expungement is not erasing history. It is recognizing growth, and reducing obstacles that serve no constructive purpose years after a sentence is complete.

This bill is also structured to prevent endless relitigation. If the court denies a petition, the denial cannot be appealed, and the person must wait at least three years to file again for the same conviction. That balances fairness with finality, while still leaving room for a person to come back later if their circumstances have meaningfully changed.

### **Request**

For these reasons, the Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 525.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Higdon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas Higdon  
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