CAP MD Testimony SB 483.pdf

CAP

Maryland General Assembly

Senate Judiciary Committee

Written Testimony in support of Senate Bill 483

An Act Concerning Automatic Expungement of Criminal Records

February 17th, 2026

My name is Akua Amaning and I am the Director for Public Safety at the Center for American Progress. It is my pleasure to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 483, a measure that would allow for automatic expungement of certain conviction records and would open doors to opportunity for hundreds of thousands of Maryland residents currently held back by a conviction record. I urge the legislature to pass this important measure.

Today, over 1 million Marylanders carry a conviction record. No record is too old or too inconsequential to serve as a barrier to employment, housing, education, public assistance, family reunification and the ability to build good credit. For too many justice-involved people, a record can leave them with lifelong restrictive barriers which preclude them from accessing resources needed to promote stable futures for themselves and their families.

Every constituent of Maryland should have a fair opportunity to earn a living, support their family and contribute to their community. While felony convictions carry perhaps the greatest stigma, any criminal record can present insurmountable hurdles to gainful employment. 94 percent of employers use background checks to make hiring decisions, which often can mean the difference between a job offer and a rejection. As a result, the unemployment rate among

formerly incarcerated people is over 27 percent – higher than the U.S. unemployment rate during the Great Depression.

Safe and stable housing can also be out of reach for individuals with criminal records, with an estimated 90 percent of landlords conducting background checks on prospective renters. Formerly incarcerated people are 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population.

These barriers to opportunity can have ripple effects for generations. According to analysis by the Center for American Progress, nearly half of all American children have at least one parent with a criminal record. When parents are shut out of the labor and housing markets, it can significantly undermine family stability and economic security. A child's long-term outcomes are closely tied to childhood circumstances, and thus the barriers associated with parental criminal records can prevent kids from realizing their full potential into adulthood.

People deserve a second chance and a real chance to overcome their mistakes. Record expungement is a powerful solution to breaking down barriers to opportunity for justice-involved individuals and their families. A major study from researchers at the University of Michigan found that within a year of expungement, people who were successfully able to clear their records saw their wages increase by more than 20 percent. Record expungement also benefits public safety. The same study also found evidence that record clearing can reduce recidivism rates: Michiganders who received expungements were less likely to commit a crime than the general population.

At the national level polling suggests that most Americans—across the political spectrum—are in favor of automatic record expungement measures. Seventy percent of Americans support automated record expungement policies—including 66 percent of Republicans and 75 percent of Democrats. And states across the country (as diverse as Pennsylvania, Michigan, Delaware, Utah, Texas, and New York to name a few) have already taken steps to implement their own automatic record expungement measures, with great success. For example, Pennsylvania's automated record expungement measure has helped to clear over 45 million records since its implementation in 2019. With this over 1.2 million Pennsylvanians have been given a meaningful second chance to build towards a successful future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

While petition-based record clearance measures exist under current Maryland law, these remedies often leave most eligible people behind. Many people are unaware that they are entitled to record-clearing. Others struggle to navigate the expensive and complicated process of filing a record-clearing petition in court, which for most requires hiring a lawyer and taking time off work to appear in court, often racking up thousands of dollars in legal bills and court costs. Meanwhile, the courts must process each petition one by one, straining valuable judicial resources. Consequently, record-clearing is out of reach for all but the most well-resourced

Americans. These same challenges are evidenced by [research from The Paper Prisons Initiative of Santa Clara University](), which found that under Maryland's existing record clearance measures, only two percent of eligible people successfully have their conviction records cleared.

Maryland's automated record expungement legislation (SB 483) will require the implementation of a system that automatically seals eligible records through the use of technology and will ensure that everyone who qualifies for record-clearing gets the clean slate they deserve—regardless of whether they can afford a lawyer and expensive court fees and without navigating a complex court process. SB 483 is also beneficial for economic growth. Through this legislation, more Marylanders have access to workforce opportunities and businesses can access a broader candidate pool of qualified workers. These opportunities not only benefit those who are directly impacted, but ultimately help stimulate local businesses, communities, and the state's overall economy.

On behalf of the Center for American Progress, I urge the Maryland Senate and Assembly to swiftly pass and sign SB 483 into law. With these measures, Maryland has the opportunity to uplift justice-impacted individuals and their families while building safer and healthier communities for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony for the record.

Akua Amaning

Director, Public Safety

Center for American Progress

aamaning@americanprogress.org

SB483_ArielleJuberg_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Arielle Juberg

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 8. I am testifying in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so. They may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1]

This has lasting effects. Charges that people could have had expunged may instead remain on their records permanently, which can dramatically impact their lives for the worse. Potential consequences of having a criminal record include being unable to rent an apartment, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of one's children, access some government services, or vote in elections.[2] These avoidable consequences limit people's lives and ability to participate meaningfully in society and contribute to their communities.

SB483 would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the judiciary case search website) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of the person whose case it is filing a request for expungement. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in theory, but in practice for Marylanders who are eligible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Arielle Juberg
3411 Upton Road
Baltimore, MD 21234
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

SB0483_HB0360_FAV_OFJ.pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 483 / HOUSE BILL 360

Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committee

DATE: February 17th, 2026

FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Consultant

Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ) is an organization comprised of individuals directly and indirectly impacted by the criminal legal system. We advocate for reforming policies and practices that adversely affect successful reintegration into society. OFJ supports Senate Bill 398 / House Bill 545, which would automate the expungement process for eligible misdemeanors in Maryland.

A criminal record can be both the cause and consequence of poverty and has detrimental effects on the employment, housing, education, and licensing prospects for the estimated 25% of working-age Marylanders with a record (pg.33). Every year, approximately 15,000 Marylanders are released from state prisons and struggle to secure a job, find a place to live and reenter society. Demographically, 71% of Maryland's prison population is black (pg.20), the highest in the nation, leaving African-African Marylanders disproportionately impacted by lack of access to education, housing, and employment due to a criminal record. One out of three Marylanders returning from incarceration returns to Baltimore City, where OFJ's member base is the strongest. Our district contains one of the highest concentrations of returning citizens in the state, making criminal record expungements a critical access point for re-entry.

The Maryland General Assembly has passed a variety of expungement access reforms, including 2016's Justice Reinvestment Act, which allowed many misdemeanors and a few felonies to be eligible for expungement, and 2023's REDEEM Act, which cut the criminal record expungement waiting periods in half. Taken together, these bills were incredibly beneficial for our members, allowing millions to access employment, housing, licensing, and more. However, MVLS data show that only 2% of people with convictions eligible for expungement pursued an expungement. We estimate this is due to backlogs within the courts or the individual simply not knowing they are eligible. Our partners at the Office of the Public Defender, Maryland Legal Aid, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, Baltimore Action Legal Team, and others have done exceptional work hosting expungement clinics to assist our members. Still, the automated process listed in Senate Bill 483 / House Bill 360 would save time and energy for all parties involved.

If this bill passes, over 400,000 Maryland adults could have their records cleared overnight. It does not alter the manual petition process set forth in Criminal Procedure §10–110 or 10–105, but expands the existing automated expungement process for cannabis in §10–112. OFJ fully supports efforts to remove barriers to employment, education, housing, and more for Marylanders with a misdemeanor. For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report.

SB483_HB360 - Clean Slate Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Daryl Yoder

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 44A and a longtime volunteer with Out for Justice. **I am testifying in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so. They may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1]

This has lasting effects. Charges that people could have had expunged may instead remain on their records permanently, which can dramatically impact their lives for the worse. Potential consequences of having a criminal record include being unable to rent an apartment, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of one's children, access some government services, or vote in elections.[2] These avoidable consequences limit people's lives and ability to participate meaningfully in society and contribute to their communities.

SB483 would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the judiciary case search website) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of the person whose case it is filing a request for expungement. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in theory, but in practice for any Marylanders who are eligible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Daryl Yoder
309 Glenmore Ave.
Catonsville, MD 21228
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

MDCC_SB 483_Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Grason Wiggins

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 483

Position: Favorable
Committee: Judicial Proceedings
Date: February 17, 2026

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce ("Maryland Chamber") is a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth and opportunity for all Marylanders.

Senate Bill 483 (SB 483) will create an automated process to expunge eligible criminal records, which will remove administrative barriers and further promote participation in Maryland's workforce. SB 483 benefits both jobseekers and the broader economy. Employers gain access to a larger, more diverse pool of skilled workers, while individuals regain the opportunity to contribute productively to their communities and the state's economy.

Importantly, SB 483 maintains public safety protections by limiting automatic expungement to eligible cases, ensuring a balanced approach that protects communities while promoting second chances. We believe this is a practical policy that strengthens Maryland's workforce and supports economic growth. **For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 483.**

SB 483 Clean Slate Act of 2026 CCJR FAV.pdf
Uploaded by: Heather Warnken
Position: FAV

UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE
Center for Criminal Justice Reform

<u>**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 483**</u>

Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law
DATE: February 13, 2026

The University of Baltimore School of Law's Center for Criminal Justice Reform ("the Center") is dedicated to supporting community-driven efforts to improve public safety and to address the harm and inequities caused by the criminal legal system. **The Center strongly supports Senate Bill 483.**

Senate Bill 483, the Clean Slate Act of 2026, will automate the sealing process and shield from public view eligible misdemeanor records after seven years have passed and will shield non-conviction and arrest records after three years have passed. In doing so, this legislation sets forth a much needed pathway in Maryland to a meaningful second chance, one that is accessible to everyone who earns it. Senate Bill 483 ensures that people are no longer perpetually defined by their criminal records and are better positioned to work, pursue education, secure housing, and contribute fully to their communities.

The Center urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 483 for three primary reasons. First, expanding access to record sealing reduces collateral consequences and strengthens Maryland's workforce and economy. Second, automated record sealing is necessary to close the well-documented gap between eligibility for relief and actual relief. Third, Senate Bill 483 does not pose a risk to public safety; rather, research suggests it will likely promote public safety.

I. **Expanding Access To Record Sealing through Senate Bill 483 Reduces Collateral Consequences And Strengthens Maryland's Workforce And Economy**

A criminal record creates long-lasting barriers to employment, housing, education, and occupational licensing.[1] Currently, an estimated 1 million adults in Maryland have an arrest or conviction record, meaning these barriers affect families, communities, and the broader economy at scale.[2]

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[1] Colleen Chien, America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap, 119 Mich. L. Rev. 519, 554 (2020) ("Because a criminal record can substantially limit a person's opportunity to obtain employment, housing, public benefits, and student loans; to qualify for certain professions; and to gain entrance into higher education, having a record has been called 'a civil death.'").

[2] Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2012, 26, Incarceration Research - Criminal Record Amounts by State.pdf.

Record clearance increases income, labor force participation, and economic stability.[3] Employers overwhelmingly rely on background checks,[4] and research shows that individuals who receive record clearance experience significant improvements in employment outcomes.[5] Each year, Maryland loses an estimated 1.5 billion in taxable income due to clearable convictions and arrests remaining publicly visible,[6] and this number does not account for the economic loss suffered by those with non-conviction records.

At a time of dire budget deficits and fiscal strain, this legislation would be a powerful step in the right direction for the state's economy. Senate Bill 483 removes unnecessary barriers to work and allows Marylanders to contribute to the workforce Maryland needs to thrive.

II. Automated Record Sealing Is Necessary To Close The Well-Documented Gap Between Eligibility For Relief And Actual Relief

Maryland's current petition-based record clearance system places the administrative burden on individuals, requiring legal knowledge, time, financial resources, and navigation of complex court processes. As a result, most people who are eligible for relief never receive it. Research consistently shows that under petition-based systems, uptake rates range from as low as 0.2% to 11% nationwide,[7] leaving millions of eligible individuals without relief.[8]

Maryland actually ranks among the lowest in the country in eligible individuals receiving relief. In Maryland, approximately 407,000 adults are currently eligible for full record clearance, yet only about 2% of eligible individuals obtain relief under the existing system.[9] At current rates, it would take decades to clear all eligible records.[10] Automated record sealing through Senate Bill 483 directly addresses this gap by eliminating unnecessary administrative barriers and ensuring that eligibility translates into actual relief.

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[3] J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study, 133 HARV. L. REV. 2460, 2524–28 (2020); Colleen Chien, America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap, 119 Mich. L. Rev. 519, 554, 556–58 (2020).

[4] Society for Human Resource Management, Conducting Background Investigations and Reference Checks, Conducting Background Investigations and Reference Checks.

[5] J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study, 133 HARV. L. REV. 2460, 2528 (2020).

[6] Chien, Colleen, Alyssa Aguilar, Navid Shaghaghi, Varun Guharathi, Rohit Rathish, Matthew Stubenberg, Christopher Sweeney, The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap, Paper Prisons Initiative, The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap.pdf. Note: estimates are based on a 5% sample of individuals with criminal histories between 2000-2020 drawn from Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) as well as district and circuit courts.

[7] Colleen Chien, America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap, 119 Mich. L. Rev. 519, 556-58 (2020). This study found that there were 300,000 to 2 million people in each of the states examined with convictions that were eligible for expungement who did not receive those expungements.

[8] J.J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study, 133 HARV. L. REV. 2460, 2466 (2020). This study focused on Michigan concluded that only 6.5% of eligible individuals received expungements in that state within the first five years of being eligible. It projected a lifetime expungement uptake rate of less than 12% of those who were not sentenced to a period of incarceration and an even lower lifetime expungement uptake rate for those who were sentenced to incarceration.

[9] CSI State Data Fact Sheet, Creating a Fresh Start for Marylanders: The Clean Slate Act of 2026, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6761dfd1807a6a3c15b5d91d/t/6980dc8409e36b4b672e1e84/1770052740223/2026_Creating+a+Fresh+Start+for+Marylanders+The+Clean+Slate+Act.pdf.

[10] *Id.*

III. Evidence-Based Waiting Periods In Senate Bill 483 Promote Public Safety Rather Than Undermine It

Opposition to record sealing often raises concerns about public safety. However, extensive research demonstrates that after a period of 5 to 7 years without new criminal activity, individuals with records pose no greater risk to public safety than the general population.[11] Waiting periods in Senate Bill 483 align with this evidence and reflect widely accepted research on "time to redemption."[12]

Studies examining automated record clearance in other states, including Michigan, show that individuals who receive record relief have lower rates of subsequent criminal justice contact than the general population.[13] There is no empirical evidence that record sealing undermines public safety.[14] In contrast, continued exposure to collateral consequences, especially unemployment and housing instability, is associated with higher recidivism risk.[15] By facilitating access to employment and stability, Senate Bill 483 will enhance public safety outcomes rather than compromise them.

Senate Bill 483 builds on years of research, advocacy, and bipartisan momentum across the state and country to modernize the approach to record clearance. By automating relief for people who have earned it, the Clean Slate Act advances public safety, strengthens the economy, and promotes fairness and opportunity across the state.

For these reasons, the Center for Criminal Justice Reform respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 483.

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[11]Dr. Laura Chavez and Jesse Kelley, Clean Slate Initiative, Policy Short, Reforming Waiting Periods: Fostering Equity and Unleashing Employment Opportunities, Reforming Waiting Periods: Fostering Equity and Unleashing Employment Opportunities | The Clean Slate Initiative. See also, J.J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, The Power of a Clean Slate, The Power of a Clean Slate | Cato Institute.

[12] *Id.*

[13] Chien, Colleen, Alyssa Aguilar, Navid Shaghaghi, Varun Guharathi, Rohit Rathish, Matthew Stubenberg, Christopher Sweeney, The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap, Paper Prisons Initiative, The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap.pdf.

[14] Sonja B. Starr, "Expungement Reform in Arizona: The Empirical Case for a Clean Slate," 52 Arizona State Law Journal 1059, 1076 (2020).

[15] J.J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, The Power of a Clean Slate, The Power of a Clean Slate | Cato Institute.

SB483_HB360 - Clean Slate Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Holly Powell

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee**,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46. I am testifying in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so. They may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1]

This has lasting effects. Charges that people could have had expunged may instead remain on their records permanently, which can dramatically impact their lives for the worse. Potential consequences of having a criminal record include being unable to rent an apartment, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of one's children, access some government services, or vote in elections.[2] These avoidable consequences limit people's lives and ability to participate meaningfully in society and contribute to their communities.

SB483 would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the judiciary case search website) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of the person whose case it is filing a request for expungement. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in theory, but in practice for any Marylanders who are eligible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Holly Powell
2308 Cambridge Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21224
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46, Baltimore City.** All of us have made mistakes, done things for which we have suffered the consequences. Once we have done everything we can to mitigate the harm we have caused, don't we want to start again? Don't we hope people will judge us for who we are now and how we coped with our mistakes? **I am testifying in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so. They may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1]

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It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jan Kleinman
250 President ST Unit 508, Baltimore, MD 21202
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

Health Care for the Homeless - 2026 FAV SB 483 - C

Uploaded by: Joanna Diamond

Position: FAV

HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

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

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 17, 2026

Health Care for the Homeless strongly supports SB 483, Clean Slate Act of 2026, because it will help end homelessness by reducing barriers to employment and housing. SB 483 rightly recognizes that individuals should not continue to be penalized or stigmatized for charges that our public policy has determined should be expunged.

Criminal records, including records eligible for expungement, create almost insurmountable barriers to obtaining employment, housing, education, and other critical resources like social safety net programs.[1] At Health Care for the Homeless, our clients have been denied gainful employment even due to having non-convictions on their record, causing them into homelessness or to remain homeless. This was the case with one of our clients, Stephanie.[2] In 2004, Stephanie was charged with a number of offenses, all of which were dismissed. Stephanie has tried for 15 years to find gainful employment, as a single mother who is homeless. She has been denied employment numerous times directly because of her criminal record. These employers explicitly cited her non-convictions as the reason to deny her employment. Such a criminal background, convictions or not, prevent individuals from financial stability and harm Maryland families. Non-convictions are just one such example of policies that individuals have a right to expunge in Maryland, but for any number of reasons, have not yet gone through the expungement process. Such records should unquestionably be automatically expunged as a matter of public policy.

SB 483 helps realize existing Maryland law. Our State has determined that it is prudent public policy to create a pathway for certain charges and dispositions to be expunged. The Clean Slate Act of 2026 streamlines this process and helps make this important public policy a reality for Marylanders. This is an overdue and much-needed step towards ending homelessness in our State. We urge a favorable report by the Committee.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 11,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.
Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.
For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.

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[1] *See* American Public Health Association, *Housing and Homelessness as a Public Health Issue* (Nov. 2017), *available at* https://apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2018/01/18/housing-and-homelessness-as-a-public-health-issue.
[2] To maintain confidentiality, we did not use the client's real name.

SB483 - favorable - John Ford.pdf

Uploaded by: John Ford

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted in collaboration with Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore and Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46**. I am a workforce development professional, organizational psychology practitioner, and on my community association board. **I am testifying in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so. They may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1]

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SB483 would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the judiciary case search website) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of the person whose case it is filing a request for expungement. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in theory, but in practice for any Marylanders who are eligible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
John Preston Ford
529 S East Ave, Baltimore, MD 21224

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

testimony SB 483 MDDCSAM expungement clean slate F
Uploaded by: Joseph Adams, MD
Position: FAV

MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

SB 483   SUPPORT

Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)
        Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee   March 3, 2026

Over half of incarcerated adults in the U.S. have a substance use disorder (SUD). **(1) (2) (3)**
Among people criminally charged or convicted, the proportion with an SUD or a mental health disorder is also very high.

There is a vicious cycle where the harms caused by a criminal record tend to undermine our addiction treatment and recovery efforts across Maryland. A criminal record can be an insurmountable barrier to overcoming addiction or achieving stability, in turn contributing to continued criminal legal involvement.

A criminal record can disqualify people from employment, rental applications (leading to housing instability), exacerbate racial and other inequalities, and perpetuate intergenerational disadvantage. **About one million adults in Maryland, over one in five, has an arrest or conviction record. (4)**

For an individual who is criminally charged (with or without a conviction), a criminal record is generated. **Unfortunately, automatic expungements are very limited in Maryland.** Typically, if and when they become eligible for expungement, individuals must initiate a **lengthy, cumbersome process** involving understanding the process, filing a petition, attending court proceedings, etc. **The expungement process is even more onerous, or insurmountable, for individuals with substance use or mental health disorders. Many who are eligible never start the process.**

Due to paperwork and bureaucracy, **an un-expunged criminal record continues to harm individuals, and their families, throughout their lifetimes, particularly those least able to attain stability** in job training, employment, or regular involvement in addiction treatment and recovery activities.

Research shows that people who obtain expungements have very low subsequent reoffending rates, and have improved earnings. Punishment should not be lifelong for minor offenses. The concept of rehabilitation recognizes that dismissed charges should not be permanently stigmatizing.

We urge a favorable report.

Respectfully,

Joseph A. Adams, MD, FASAM, Board certified in addiction medicine and internal medicine
Co-Chair, MDDCSAM Public Policy Committee; Chair, MedChi Opioid, Pain & Addiction Committee
(for identification)

REFERENCES:

1. 47 % of adults in U.S. prisons met criteria for a substance use disorder (SUD) in the year prior to their incarceration. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2024/01/30/punishing-drug-use/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

2. Other research and public-health estimates indicate that somewhere between ~58 % and ~65 % of incarcerated people meet criteria for an SUD (including alcohol or drug use disorders).
https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/criminal-justice?utm_source=chatgpt.com

3. 63 % of people in local jails and 58 % in state/federal prisons have SUDs — far higher than the ~8 % prevalence in the general adult population.
https://www.samhsa.gov/communities/criminal-juvenile-justice/about?utm_source=chatgpt.com

4. 'Majority of Marylanders favor Clean Slate Act, reducing barriers to a fresh start for those with non-violent convictions.' February 3, 2026
https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/majority-favor-clean-slate-act/

Testimony in Support of SB483_Blaha_SURJ.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Blaha

Position: FAV

SURJ BALTIMORE

Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice, which advocates for the reform of policies and practices that adversely affect incarcerated people's successful reintegration into society. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying **in support** of **SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so because they may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the daunting process in an overburdened court system.

As a result, only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1] This has lasting and potentially devastating effects for previously incarcerated people, their families, and their communities. Charges that could have been expunged instead remain on individuals' records permanently, which can dramatically harm their lives. Having a criminal record can render a Marylander unable to rent housing, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of their children, access some government services, or vote in

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

elections.[2] These consequences are totally avoidable, yet dramatically limit people's lives and ability to reintegrate into and participate meaningfully in society and contribute to their communities.

SB483 would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the judiciary case search website) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of the person whose case it is filing a request for expungement. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in theory, but in practice for any Marylanders who are eligible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Katherine Blaha
Baltimore, MD 21209
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore

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[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

TESTIMONY - FAVORABLE

SB483 Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

To: The Honorable Senator William C. Smith, Chair, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: The Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN)
DATE: February 17, 2026

The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network offers favorable testimony in support of SB483. Our congregations serve people throughout Maryland.

It is confusing for individuals formerly incarcerated to be aware of their right to have their records expunged. Even if aware of that right, these individuals must then file legal paperwork, appear in court, and often hire an attorney. Even after obtaining a decision in their favor, they must then monitor the appliable state agency to make sure that the expungement occurs.

As a result, only 2% of eligible Marylanders receive expungement relief, and under the current system it would take 86 years to clear all eligible convictions. The consequences are profound. The estimated annual earnings loss from clearable convictions alone is $1.5 billion in taxable income, not including losses from non-conviction records. These barriers affect families, employers, and communities statewide Marylanders need a reliable, automatic mechanism to recognize when they have met the legal requirements for record clearance.

For these reasons, the Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network urges this committee to issue a favorable report on SB483.

The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN) is a ministry of The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, The Episcopal Diocese of Washington, and The Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA

Chavez, Dr. Laura - Testimony in Support of SB 483
Uploaded by: Laura Chavez
Position: FAV

Laura Chavez, Ph.D.

Director of Research and Data

The Clean Slate Initiative

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Testimony in Support of SB 483 (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

To Chairman William C. Smith, Jr. and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Laura Chavez. I am a resident of Frederick, Maryland, and the Director of Research and Data at The Clean Slate Initiative, a national non-profit whose mission is to work alongside states to streamline the record-sealing process and ensure that everyone who meets the requirements has eligible arrest and conviction records sealed through an automated process. I am writing on behalf of The Clean Slate Initiative to express our strong support for Senate Bill 483, which aims to address and rectify the impact of past records on individuals and communities.

As of 2019, around 1 million adults in Maryland, or 22% of the adult population, have some form of a record.[1] Arrest and conviction records often present significant barriers to employment, housing, education, and social reintegration. Clean Slate legislation has proven to be an effective tool for addressing these challenges by allowing eligible individuals to have their records expunged through an automated, digital, process, giving them a fresh start.

In Maryland, only 2% of people with convictions eligible for expungement under the current petition-based system get relief. Under the current system, which is costly and difficult for an average person to navigate, it would take 86 years to expunge all the eligible

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[1] The Clean Slate Initiative. (2024). "Population Estimates to Maximize Policy Impact: The Clean Slate Initiative Methodology for Estimating State Populations with a Record." Available at: cleanslateinitiative.org/data-dashboard.

convictions.[2] **On day one of implementation, Clean Slate will provide full record relief to 407,000 adults, or 40% of those with records in the state.[3]**

Thirteen states and Washington, D.C. have enacted Clean Slate laws, including our neighboring states of Delaware, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, and the positive impact on individuals and communities has been substantial. Implementing similar legislation in Maryland would significantly bolster public safety and stimulate economic growth.

Under the current system, the estimated aggregate annual earnings loss associated with convictions eligible for record expungement in Maryland is $1.5 billion of taxable income, and this estimate does not include income loss for those with non-conviction or arrest records.[4]

In addition, Clean Slate can reduce racial disparities in Maryland. Black adults have higher conviction rates than white adults, and Clean Slate legislation would shrink this disparity by one-third.[5]

A recent survey of people with records in Pennsylvania, Utah, and Michigan, which have started implementing automatic record sealing, indicates that those who have received relief are already experiencing improvements in their lives, particularly in employment.

- Nearly half (42%) reported improvement in work, employment, personal finances, or public assistance,
- 35% reported improvement in personal and family relationships, and
- 34% reported improvement in health, mental health, or self-esteem.[6]

The Clean Slate Initiative supports the proposed creation of a state-initiated process to digitally expunge eligible arrest and conviction records. Maryland can lead in pursuing

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[2] Chien, Colleen, Alyssa Aguilar, Navid Shaghaghi, Varun Guharathi, Rohit Rathish, Matthew Stubenberg, Christopher Sweeney. "The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap", Paper Prisons Initiative.

[3] The Clean Slate Initiative. (2024). "Population Estimates to Maximize Policy Impact: The Clean Slate Initiative Methodology for Estimating State Populations with a Record." Available at: cleanslateinitiative.org/data-dashboard.

[4] Chien, Colleen, Alyssa Aguilar, Navid Shaghaghi, Varun Guharathi, Rohit Rathish, Matthew Stubenberg, Christopher Sweeney. "The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap", Paper Prisons Initiative.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The Clean Slate Initiative (2024). "The Impacts of Clean Slate Laws in Pennsylvania, Utah, and Michigan." Available at: https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/2024-yougov-survey-report

fairness and justice by creating a state-initiated process that expunges certain records once individuals are eligible. If it does, those eligible for automated record expungement in the state can reap the proven benefits, particularly in terms of employment, which will add to the state's tax base.

The proposed timeline for implementing the law, starting on August 1, 2028, is pragmatic and aligns with the implementation timelines of other states working toward and that have begun automatic record sealing. This timeline allows ample time for adjustments in administrative processes to ensure a smooth transition to a more equitable system.

In summary, recognizing the positive impact on the lives of individuals seeking redemption and reintegration into society, The Clean Slate Initiative urges the Judicial Proceedings Committee to support SB 483.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Chavez, Ph.D.
Director of Research & Data at The Clean Slate Initiative

lchavez@cleanslateinitiative.org

Attachments:

- CSI Maryland Fact Sheet
- CSI Data Methodology Overview
- Impacts of Clean Slate in Maryland
- Research Brief: Automatic Record Clearance Removes Barriers and Delivers Improvements for People with Records

CLEAN SLATE IN MARYLAND

THE PROBLEM

More than 1 in 5 adults in Maryland (22%) have an arrest or conviction record that creates barriers to employment, housing, and education.

Under Maryland's current petition-based process, **less than 2% of people with old records have been able to successfully seal those records after becoming eligible** — because the process is complex, costly, and confusing.

THE SOLUTION

The Maryland Clean Slate Act (HB 360/SB 483) will automate expungement of sealing eligible records once the requirements are met, which includes remaining crime-free for a period of time. **Law enforcement would retain access to sealed records**, but the record would not appear on routine background checks used for employment, housing, and other opportunities.

To date, **13 states and Washington, D.C., have passed Clean Slate laws, making more than 18 million people eligible** for full or partial record sealing across America.

Clean Slate isn't about erasing the past. **It's about ensuring people who've completed their sentence and remained crime-free aren't permanently held back by it.**
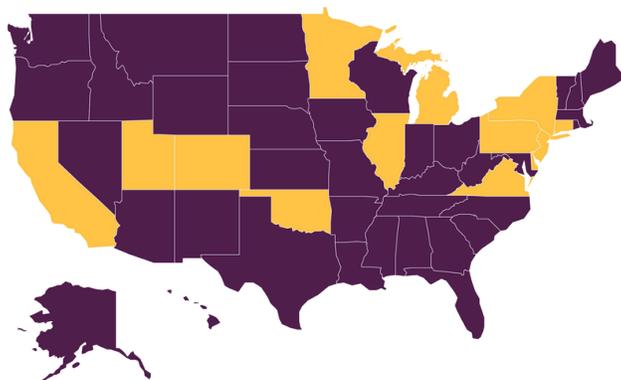
= CLEAN SLATE STATE

1,000,000

1 million adults (22%) in Maryland have an arrest or conviction record.

22%
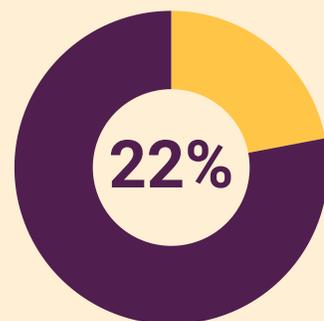
407,000

407,000 adults with a record in Maryland (40%) would become eligible to have their record fully sealed under HB 360/SB 483.

40%
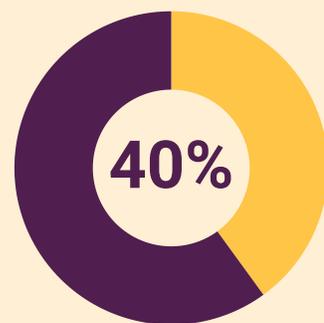
The statistics above are estimated by The Clean Slate Initiative (CSI).

Learn more about the data and methodology by visiting CSI's Data Dashboard at **cleanslateinitiative.org/data**.

CLEAN SLATE IS A WIN FOR MARYLAND

Cuts Red Tape: Clean Slate legislation streamlines the process by reducing bureaucracy and making the system work more efficiently for everyone.

Improves Public Safety: Clean Slate is far from a free pass — it's about making sure those who have taken responsibility for past mistakes can move forward after doing all that's been asked of them. Automated processes are rigorously tested, monitored, and supplemented with human oversight. Although sealed records are not publicly available, they remain visible to law enforcement and courts.

Strengthens Our Economy: Clean Slate laws expand the workforce, helping businesses find the best employees and creating opportunities for workers to earn higher wages. This puts more money in the pockets of American families and reduces dependence on government assistance.

ABOUT THE MARYLAND CLEAN SLATE ACT

Clean Slate has strong bipartisan support in Maryland. **SB 483** is sponsored by **Sen. Mike McKay (R)**, and **HB 360** is sponsored by **Rep. David Moon (D)**, the House Majority Leader**.**

The legislation would create an automated process to seal eligible records for Marylanders who fulfill their legal obligations to the criminal justice system.

- **Eligible Misdemeanor Convictions** would be sealed after a 7-year conviction-free waiting period.

- **Non-convictions (dismissals, acquittals, etc.)** would be sealed three years after the case is closed.

EXCLUSIONS & LIMITATIONS

- **Serious, violent, and/or sexual offenses are excluded from automated sealing.**

- C**ourts retain sealed record access and law enforcement can request access when necessary.**

CLEAN SLATE MARYLAND COALITION PARTNERS

SHORE LEGAL ACCESS

CENTER FOR URBAN FAMILIES
HELPING FATHERS AND FAMILIES WORK

OFJ

BUILD
ROOTED IN COMMUNITY.
COMMITTED TO CHANGE.

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform
MAJR

MVLS
MARYLAND VOLUNTEER LAWYERS SERVICE

R Street
Free markets. Real solutions.

CSI | THE CLEAN SLATE INITIATIVE

RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS INITIATIVE
FOR JUSTICE

CAP

CSI | THE CLEAN SLATE INITIATIVE

CSI'S DATA METHODOLOGY

The Clean Slate Initiative (CSI) data dashboard methodology builds upon the approach used by Shannon et al. and the Brennan Center for Justice. We apply conviction rates, recidivism rates, deportation rates, mortality/survival rates, and inter-state mobility rates to estimate how many unique people are impacted by a record (vs. the number of cases or arrests reported). See below for citations.

How We Calculated the Number of People with a Record by State*

Sample data, not actual data, is represented below.

Year	State	Population Group	Total Arrests Reported to FBI UCR Program for Likely Misdemeanor Offenses (Adjusted for Under-Reporting Agencies)	Conviction Rate (Measures for Justice, US Dept. of Labor Statistics)	Recidivism Rate (Measures for Justice, US Dept. of Labor Statistics)	Mortality Rate (CDC Data)	Inter-State Mobility (US Census Data)	Deportations (ICE/Syracuse University TRAC Data excluding People Previously Deported)	Estimated Population with a Record
2017	California	Latino	200,000	70%	37%	1%	+3%	-30,000	59,937
2018	California	Latino	300,000	71%	30%	0%	+1%	-20,000	130,591
2019	California	Latino	400,000	72%	19%	0%	+2%	-10,000	227,946
								Total	**418,475**

See "Where we got our information" section on the next page.

Where We Got Our Information

	Felony Convictions	Misdemeanor Convictions	Non-Convictions
Type of Data Used	State prison releases, felony probation admissions, and prison/probation recidivism rates published by the federal government	Arrests reported by local and state law enforcement agencies to the federal government, applying misdemeanor conviction and recidivism rates published by Measures for Justice and the Bureau of Labor Statistics	Felony and misdemeanor conviction rates published by Measures for Justice and the National Center for State Courts
Agencies/Entities Data was Sourced From	U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics	U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, State Arrests and Criminal History Data, and Measures for Justice	Measures for Justice and National Center for State Courts
Datasets Used to Produce CSI Estimates	BJS National Corrections Reporting Program 1991-2019 BJS National Prisoner Statistics Program 1978-1990 BJS Annual Survey of Probation 1985-2018	FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program 1995-2019 Measures for Justice State-Level Misdemeanor Conviction and Recidivism Rates National Misdemeanor Conviction and Recidivism Rates, and Total Cases/Convictions per Person Estimated from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 2019 Official arrests/criminal history data from TX, FL, IL and NYC	Measures for Justice State-Level Felony and Misdemeanor Conviction Rates National Center for State Courts Nationwide Felony and Misdemeanor Conviction Rates

Resources

Shannon, S. K., Uggen, C., Schnittker, J., Thompson, M., Wakefield, S., & Massoglia, M. (2017). The growth, scope, and spatial distribution of people with felony records in the United States, 1948–2010. Demography, 54(5), 1795-1818.

Craigie, T.A., Grawert, A., & Kimble, C. (2020). Conviction, imprisonment, and lost earnings: How involvement with the criminal justice system deepens inequality. Brennan Center for Justice at New York University.

Impacts of Clean Slate in Maryland

Today, only **2**% of people with convictions eligible for clearance under the existing petition-based system get relief. It would take **86 years** to clear all the eligible convictions under the current system.[1]

This means that around **300,000** people in Maryland have conviction records eligible for clearance today and are not getting the relief.[7]

Clean Slate will automate the record-clearing process and provide full record clearance to **407,000** people with conviction and non-conviction records, clearing the backlog and providing additional people with opportunities.[8]

Under the current system, the estimated aggregate annual earnings loss associated with clearable convictions is **$1.5 billion** of taxable income, and this estimate doesn't include the income loss for those with non-conviction records.[1]

Black adults have a higher rate of convictions than white adults[9], and if all eligible conviction records were cleared as a result of Clean Slate, this disparity would shrink by one third.[1]

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[7] Source: Chien, Colleen, Alyssa Aguilar, Navid Shaghaghi, Varun Guharathi, Rohit Rathish, Matthew Stubenberg, Christopher Sweeney. "The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap", Paper Prisons Initiative. Note: estimates are based on a 5% sample of individuals with criminal histories between 2000-2020 drawn from Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) as well as district and circuit courts.

[8] Source: The Clean Slate Initiative data model. See: Methodology Overview. Note: impact estimates take into account legislative parameters. Estimates of the populations with conviction and non-conviction records are through 2019.

[9] The Clean Slate Initiative estimates that around 27% of Black adults and 22% of white adults have a conviction or non-conviction record in Maryland, using the methodology described above.

AUTOMATIC RECORD CLEARANCE REMOVES BARRIERS AND DELIVERS IMPROVEMENTS FOR PEOPLE WITH RECORDS

A Clean Slate Research Brief by [Dr. Laura Chavez](#)

People with records face substantial barriers that limit their participation in society, particularly in employment, housing, and education. Clean Slate laws address these challenges by automatically sealing eligible records for individuals who have completed their sentences and remained crime-free. Thus, the burden of clearance shifts from individuals to the state, eliminating the burden of navigating a complex, costly, and often inaccessible petition-based system.

This research brief draws on a recent [survey of 800 people with arrest and conviction records in Pennsylvania, Utah, and Michigan.](#) The survey was developed by CSI in collaboration with Dr. Nyron Crawford, Associate Professor of Political Science at Temple University, and administered by YouGov. Here we highlight the economic, social, and psychological impacts of Clean Slate laws as revealed by the survey data.

Just a few years after passage, Clean Slate legislation is already benefiting people in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Utah

Clean Slate laws have been passed in 12 states to date, including Pennsylvania in 2018, Utah in 2019, and Michigan in 2020. By 2024, 15 million people became eligible for full or partial record clearance across the 12 Clean Slate states,[1] and over 2 million are eligible for full or partial relief in Pennsylvania, Utah, and Michigan, which started clearing records automatically in 2019,

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[1] See The Clean Slate Initiative. (2024). "Population Estimates to Maximize Policy Impact: The Clean Slate Initiative Methodology for Estimating State Populations with a Record." Available at: cleanslateinitiative.org/data

CSI THE
CLEAN SLATE
INITIATIVE

There are a lot of reasons why people don't seek record relief.

"Because it cost[s] a lot of money in my state last I checked."

"Financially, I could not afford a lawyer to get it done."

"Too complicated, costly, unsure of the routes to take."

"At first I wasn't aware that I could. After that it was because I didn't know anything about the process, how to get started, or if I would even be eligible to do so."

This data is from a survey of people with records in MI, PA, and UT. More info: cleanslateinitiative.space/2024-yougov

2020, and 2023, respectively. Many of these records are over 10 years old,[2] so very real questions existed among lawmakers, advocates, and directly impacted people as to whether the clearance of decades-old records would deliver tangible benefits.

The survey data clearly indicate that those eligible for automatic record clearance are already experiencing real improvements in their lives. Unlike petition-based systems, where individuals must navigate complex legal procedures, pay fees, and often require legal assistance to clear their records, Clean Slate laws remove these barriers by automating the process. This is particularly significant because studies show that only a small fraction of those eligible ever file petitions for records clearance.[3] The reasons are clear: the petition-based process is often prohibitively difficult, expensive, and inaccessible for many, especially those already burdened by the economic and social consequences of having a record.

By shifting the burden to the state, Clean Slate laws ensure that relief reaches all eligible individuals, including those who may not even know they qualify. This automatic process eliminates the need for legal intervention, democratizing access to record clearance and delivering benefits to people who would otherwise remain trapped by their past. The data show

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[2] In Pennsylvania, the passage of "Clean Slate 3.0" expanded eligibility for automatic sealing in 2024 to include some non-violent felony convictions, which can become eligible for sealing after 10 years, and many misdemeanor convictions may be sealed after 7 years. Summary convictions can be sealed after 5 years (see: www.mycleanslatepa.com). In Michigan, some felony convictions are eligible for automatic set aside after 10 years, and many misdemeanor convictions are eligible after 7 years (see: https://www.michigan.gov/msp/services/chr/conviction-set-aside-public-information/michigan-clean-slate). And, in Utah, misdemeanor convictions are eligible for automatic expungement after 5 to 7 years (see: www.cleanslateutah.org).

[3] See: Chien, Colleen. "America's paper prisons: The second chance gap." *Michigan Law Review* (2020): 519-611. See also: Prescott, J.J. and S. Starr. (2020). Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study. *Harvard Law Review.* 133(8): 2460-555.

THE **CLEAN SLATE** INITIATIVE

1

1 – in – 3

Nearly 1 in 3 (29 percent) strongly or somewhat agreed they **know someone who has already benefited or will likely benefit in the future from their state's Clean Slate law.**

This data is from a survey of people with records in MI, PA, and UT.
More info: cleanslateinitiative.space/2024-yougov

that people with automatically cleared records report improvements in employment opportunities, family relationships, and mental health, showing that Clean Slate's systemic approach can be more effective at providing relief and helping people rebuild their lives than the traditional petition-based system.

In this survey of people with records, nearly half (46%) of those who had a criminal record sealed, expunged, or set aside had their record cleared *automatically*.

Respondents felt that they had benefited personally from record clearance and that they would continue to benefit in the future.

- Over one-third (38%) of those whose records were cleared automatically agreed that they had already benefited or would likely benefit from Clean Slate laws.

- 36% of Black people agreed they know someone who has already benefited or will likely benefit in the future.
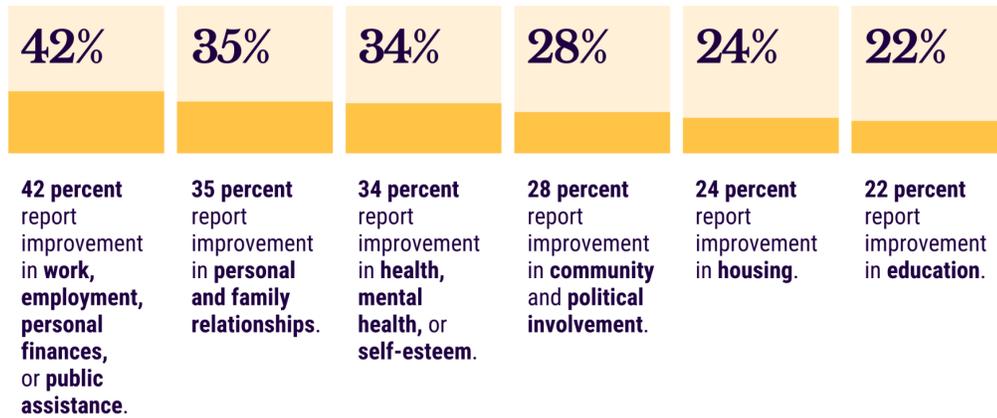
People who know their records have been cleared automatically report improvements, especially in employment, family relationships, and mental health

Research demonstrates that when people's records are cleared through a petition-based process, their earnings increase by over 22% in the first year.[4] Yet even with this research, the question remained as to whether this same benefit is realized by people who don't have to take action to clear their

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[4] See: Prescott, J.J. and S. Starr. (2020). Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study. *Harvard Law Review.* 133(8): 2460-555.
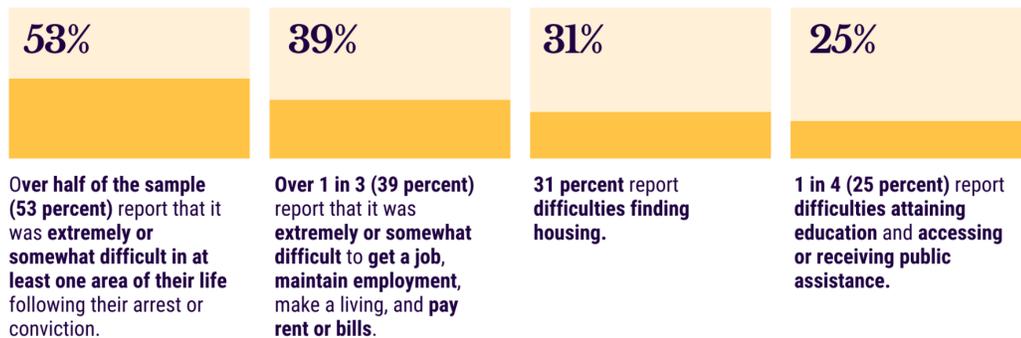
THE
CLEAN SLATE
INITIATIVE

Clean Slate's Impact

People who **received automatic record relief report improvements**, particularly economic.

42%	35%	34%	28%	24%	22%
42 percent report improvement in **work, employment, personal finances,** or **public assistance**.	**35 percent** report improvement in **personal and family relationships**.	**34 percent** report improvement in **health, mental health,** or **self-esteem**.	**28 percent** report improvement in **community** and **political involvement**.	**24 percent** report improvement in **housing**.	**22 percent** report improvement in **education**.

This data is from a survey of people with records in MI, PA, and UT.
More info: cleanslateinitiative.space/2024-yougov

records. In addition, it has been unclear whether someone would even know if their record had been cleared when the process happens automatically by the government. Directly impacted respondents in three states that have recently passed and implemented Clean Slate laws, thus clearing millions of people's records automatically, report overwhelming improvements in a wide range of life factors.
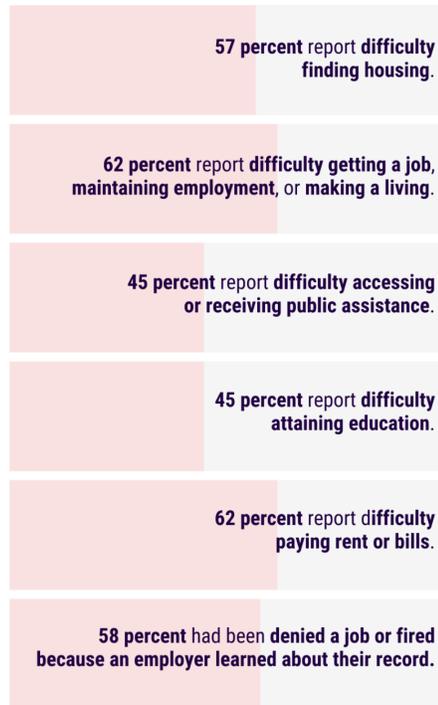
People with records face economic hardships due to their arrest or conviction.

53%	39%	31%	25%
O**ver half of the sample (53 percent)** report that it was **extremely or somewhat difficult in at least one area of their life** following their arrest or conviction.	**Over 1 in 3 (39 percent)** report that it was **extremely or somewhat difficult** to **get a job**, maintain employment, make a living, and **pay rent or bills**.	**31 percent** report **difficulties finding housing.**	**1 in 4 (25 percent)** report **difficulties attaining education** and **accessing or receiving public assistance.**

This data is from a survey of people with records in MI, PA, and UT.
More info: cleanslateinitiative.space/2024-yougov

THE
CLEAN SLATE
INITIATIVE

People with felony convictions face the most barriers.

Over 3 out of 4 (77 percent) of respondents with felony convictions report that it was **extremely or somewhat difficult** in at least one of these areas following their record.

57 percent report **difficulty finding housing**.

62 percent report **difficulty getting a job**, **maintaining employment**, or **making a living**.

45 percent report **difficulty accessing or receiving public assistance**.

45 percent report **difficulty attaining education**.

62 percent report d**ifficulty paying rent or bills**.

58 percent had been **denied a job or fired because an employer learned about their record**.

This data is from a survey of people with records in MI, PA, and UT. More info: cleanslateinitiative.space/2024-yougov

Even small improvements really matter when people with records face major barriers

There are over 42,000 laws and regulations that make having a record an ongoing burden. Over half of the people surveyed (53%) report that it was extremely or somewhat difficult in at least one area of their life following their arrest or conviction.

Barriers are even more significant for people with felony convictions. Among respondents with felony convictions, well over half (58%) had been denied a job or fired because their employer learned they had been arrested or convicted, and another 9% responded "maybe."

THE **CLEAN SLATE** INITIATIVE

About The Clean Slate Initiative

The Clean Slate Initiative (CSI) passes and implements laws that **automatically clear eligible records** for people who have completed their sentence and remained crime-free and **expands** who is eligible for clearance.

CSI's vision is that people will no longer be defined by their records and will have the opportunity to contribute to their community, have a fair opportunity to work, get an education, and achieve their full potential.

Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the individuals who made this report possible.

Special thanks to members of our Board of Directors, **Daryl Atkinson,** Co-Director and Co-Founder of Forward Justice, and **Mindy Tarlow,** Senior Fellow and Research Professor at the New York University Marron Institute of Urban Management, for their support and guidance throughout the survey development process.

We are immensely grateful to **Dr. Nyron Crawford,** Associate Professor of Political Science at Temple University, for his invaluable assistance in creating the survey, analyzing the data, and providing critical insights throughout this project. We also acknowledge **Dr. Laura Chavez** for her dedication and hard work in leading this project.

Without the collective efforts of these individuals, this comprehensive analysis of the impacts and awareness of Clean Slate laws in Pennsylvania, Utah, and Michigan would not have been possible.

THE
CLEAN SLATE
INITIATIVE

CSI

SB0483 - CLS Support - MD Clean Slate Act.pdf
Uploaded by: Lisa Sarro
Position: FAV

Jessica A. Quincosa, Esq.
Executive Director

Kayla Williams-Campbell, Esq.
Deputy Director

Lisa Sarro, Esq.
Director of Litigation and Advocacy

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL

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

Judicial Proceedings Committee Hearing
February 17, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

To the Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Community Legal Services (CLS) is a nonprofit legal services provider dedicated to ensuring equitable access to justice and due process of law for Maryland's most under-represented populations. We strive to provide high quality legal representation and counsel that supports and strengthens the economic, social, health, and housing stability of our clients. We strongly support passage of SB 483.

CLS attorneys and volunteers have conducted hundreds of expungements in the past 18 months as part of the state's efforts to expand the expungement of cannabis-related offenses that were no longer crimes. We have handled roughly one thousand expungement matters through dozens of clinics since 2023 when the law changed. We have 30 volunteers who are trained in expungement law and procedure, and many of them have participated in our events. We have seen many, many positive impacts for the clients we have helped. However, we know there are thousands more Marylanders with charges that can be expunged. By automatically expunging eligible records for people who have completed their sentence and remained crime-free, this bill would help the Marylanders who don't make their way to our clinics or to other legal services providers who could help them.

Under SB 483, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Judiciary would be required to identify and automatically expunge records of non-convictions and arrests after three years, as well as eligible misdemeanor convictions after seven years. This automatic process would be ongoing, ensuring continued record relief for eligible individuals.

Why This Legislation Matters:

1. **Evidence-Based Policy:** Research shows that individuals who remain crime-free for five to seven years are no more likely to reoffend than those without a record. This supports SB 483 as a sensible, data-driven approach to criminal justice reform.

2. **Reducing Barriers to Opportunity:** An estimated 22% of Maryland's adult population has a criminal record. These records create significant barriers to employment, housing, and education. More than 40,000 state and federal restrictions limit opportunities for people with records, leading to negative economic and social outcomes not just for the individuals, but for the entire State.

3. **Addressing Underutilization of Existing Expungement Laws:** While 40% of individuals with criminal records in Maryland are currently eligible for petition-based record sealing, less than 2% have successfully obtained relief due to the complexity of the process and lack of awareness. Automating the process ensures that all eligible individuals benefit.

4. **Proven Success in Other States:** Since 2018, 12 other states have enacted automated record-sealing laws, leading to significant improvements in employment, housing, education, and overall well-being. Data from Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Utah show that 42% of individuals receiving expungements experience job-related improvements, while 35% report better personal and family relationships.

By implementing SB 483, Maryland can join other states in providing a second chance to individuals who have paid their debt to society and remained law-abiding. This bill will not only improve lives but also strengthen Maryland families, communities, and the overall economy.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 483.

Please feel free to reach out to Jessica Quincosa, Executive Director, or Lisa Sarro, Director of Litigation & Advocacy, with any questions at quincosa@clspgc.org, and sarro@clspgc.org, respectively.

2.13 SB 483 - Criminal Procedure - Automated Expun

Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV

SB 483 - Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 17, 2026
<u>SUPPORT</u>

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.
<u>Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 483.</u>

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope

SB483

Contact:
Maryland NORML
Luke Jones, Director
Luke.MDNORML@gmail.com

750 Thayer Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(202) 285-3199

Submitted to:
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Annapolis, MD – February 15, 2026

Testimony from the Maryland State Chapter of the
National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML)

SUPPORT SB0483
Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

Disclosure Statement: Maryland NORML has no paid staff – we are entirely energized by a core group of citizen volunteers and more than 5,000 other Marylanders committed to ending marijuana prohibition and establishing a regulated cannabis commercial market for adults. I have never had any stake or investment of any kind in any cannabis enterprise, nor does anyone in my family, and I have never received any fee or remuneration for consulting with any cannabis enterprise. As an organization, we have worked to reform state and federal marijuana laws for more than 50 years.

Maryland NORML strongly supports Senate Bill 483. Automated expungement is essential to ensuring that relief provided under Maryland law is meaningful, equitable, and accessible.

Criminal records—particularly for low-level offenses, including many past cannabis-related cases—create long-term barriers to employment, housing, education, and financial stability. Requiring individuals to navigate complex legal procedures to clear eligible records undermines the intent of reform. HB 360 corrects this by directing the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Judiciary to automatically expunge qualifying cases by July 1, 2028 and on an ongoing monthly basis thereafter.

Automation promotes fairness, efficiency, and public safety. It reduces administrative burdens on courts, eliminates disparities driven by income or legal access, and allows individuals who have remained crime-free for years to fully reintegrate into society.

Maryland voters and lawmakers have already expressed support for modern cannabis policy and second-chance measures. SB0483 ensures those reforms deliver tangible results rather than symbolic relief.

For these reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on SB0483.

M. Luke Jones, Maryland NORML

SB 0483- Maryland Legal Aid- Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Meaghan McDermott

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 0483
Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement
(Clean Slate Act of 2026)
In the Judicial Proceedings Committee
Hearing on February 17, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on SB 0483 in response to a request from Senator Sydnor.

MLA testifies in support of SB 0483. The Clean Slate Act expands access to justice for Marylanders by allowing for automatic sealing and shielding of *already qualified criminal records*. Clean Slate laws make expungement more accessible to low-income people and reduce the strain on legal service providers and court resources.

Over the past decade, the Maryland General Assembly has increased expungement opportunities for Marylanders. Still, most eligible individuals do not file for expungement[1], and miss out on the many tangible impacts of an expunged record, like increased work and educational prospects and better housing.

The Clean Slate Act addresses a critical justice gap. On its face, expungement is available to any Marylander who qualifies. In reality, Maryland's petition-based expungement filing system is not easy to use without an attorney. For example, there are four different forms that a pro se litigant must choose from, and the language on the forms is confusing and sometimes contradictory. Expunging convictions (versus dismissals or acquittals) has the most impact on an individual's ability to obtain housing and employment, but that requires a filing fee of $30. This might seem like a nominal fee to higher-income individuals, but for low-income Marylanders struggling to pay for rent and groceries such a fee is a deterrent. While fee waivers are available, that is yet another system a petitioner must navigate. Often petitioners do not realize that they may have to attend a court hearing as part of the expungement process. The logistics of attending court can be overwhelming (securing childcare, time off from work, or transportation), and many petitioners simply give up at this stage.

The Clean Slate Act would alleviate resource strain for both legal service providers and the court system. When petitioners cannot navigate the expungement process on their own, they turn to providers like MLA. MLA represented or advised over 2,000 people on expungements last year. Even with that level of service, MLA and other legal service providers have nowhere

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[1] Paper Prisons, *The Maryland Second Chance Expungement Gap*, https://paperprisons.org/states/pdfs/summaries/The%20Maryland%20Second%20Chance%20Expungement%20Gap%20Report%20Summary1.pdf (last visited Feb. 12, 2026).

Baltimore City
500 East Lexington Street, Baltimore, MD 21202
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LSC *America's Partner For Equal Justice*

MLSC MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION IOLTA - INTEREST ON LAWYER TRUST ACCOUNTS

United Way

close to the resources necessary to represent the 1.5 million people who have a criminal record in Maryland. Additionally, in MLA's experience, many of these hearings are set in for administrative rather than substantive reasons and could be avoided completely by utilizing the automatic method proposed by the Clean Slate Act. In this way, the Clean Slate Act also addresses the strain that the current petition-based expungement process places on the courts.

MLA urges a favorable report on SB 0483, to allow all Marylanders equitable access to expungement.

If you would like additional information on this bill, or the underlying issues it addresses, please contact Meaghan McDermott, Advocacy Director for Community Lawyering and Development, at mmcdermott@mdlab.org.

SB 483 FAV (clean slate).pdf

<u>Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 483</u>
<u>Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)</u>

<u>TO</u>: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

<u>FROM:</u> Melissa Rothstein, Esq.

<u>DATE:</u> February 17, 2026

I am an expungement attorney for Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ), and I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 483.

OFJ seeks to engage, educate, and empower individuals impacted by the legal system to build collective power for dismantling systemic oppression and harmful policies. The organization strives to humanize marginalized communities, prevent criminalization, reduce recidivism and promote second chances and successful reintegration through advocacy, education and supportive programming. Providing the opportunity for people with a criminal conviction to clear their record after having served their sentence is a high priority for OFJ, an important component of successful long-term reentry, and a positive public safety measure.

Expungement of a criminal record restores access to work, housing, and other basic needs after someone has served their time without a new conviction after the designated waiting period. The complexities of determining whether a conviction is eligible and the process for filing of a petition result in many individuals not pursuing this remedy and remaining hampered by their prior criminal record. SB 483 will streamline the process to provide automatic removal of eligible cases from the Central Repository and electronic court records.

SB 483 does not expand the list of eligible convictions nor alter the criteria for eligibility. Rather, it streamlines the process for removing access to this information by employers, housing providers, licensing agencies, and others who may restrict opportunities based on a criminal conviction. It does so after a lengthy period of time (beyond when expungement is first available) to remove any heightened risk of recidivism.

The eligible convictions do not stem from violent or serious offenses. Rather, they are misdemeanors that disproportionately impact people with a psychiatric concern, a substance use disorder, and/or abject poverty. Automatically expunging their records can be particularly impactful to promote stability for these exceptionally vulnerable individuals. As Black and Brown individuals are disproportionately brought into the criminal legal system and face disparities throughout the process, automatic expungement is an important racial justice measure.

While promoting the removal of barriers caused by misdemeanor convictions, SB 483 seeks to balance the concerns of non-citizens, for whom destruction of these records could have significant immigration consequences. The bill does not require obliteration, although it is unclear whether the option of obliterating remains. OPD would recommend adding a provision to allow a non-citizen defendant or their attorney to obtain their own expunged records upon written request to the clerk, without requiring a judge's good cause finding.

The Clean Slate bill has the ability to help many impacted individuals. It's an important piece of legislation, that will streamline the process and encourage opportunities that promote a productive law-abiding lifestyle.

Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Testimony Prepared for the
Judicial Proceedings Committee
on
Senate Bill 483
February 13, 2026
Position: Favorable

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a faith community with congregations in every part of the state.

In Maryland we have had an authorized congregation of incarcerated people, women and men, at Jessup since 1985, and at Central Maryland Correctional Facility (a pre-release facility) since 2016: the Community of St. Dysmas. When our congregants are released, we know the challenges that they will have to face in order to live out their dream of returning home making amends to the communities that they harmed. Their records stand in the way of finding a place to live, a place to work, opportunities for education, things that are essential for someone to not only succeed but give back to the community.

Currently, Maryland's petition-based system is costly, confusing, and bureaucratic. As a result, only 2% of eligible Marylanders receive expungement relief, and under the current system it would take 86 years to clear all eligible convictions. Clean Slate is proven, bipartisan, and effective, and it has been implemented in most of Maryland's surrounding states.

We consider this a common-sense bill and we urge a favorable report.

Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon

SB483_ShoreLegalAccess_FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Meredith Girard

Position: FAV

SB483 - Criminal Procedure –
Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

HEARING BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Shore Legal Access respectfully requests your support for SB483, the Maryland Clean Slate Act, to reduce barriers to housing and employment for Marylanders with criminal records who have paid their debt to society. This bill would shield from public view criminal records for misdemeanors and charges already eligible for expungement under the law after a waiting period through an automated process. SB483 modernizes Maryland's out-of-date, petition-based system, thereby saving valuable legal services resources while increasing housing, employment, education, and service opportunities for all Marylanders. We thank the Committee for its support for groundbreaking reforms in recent years. Now it's time for our systems to catch up with our values.

Shore Legal Access (SLA) connects people on the Eastern Shore with limited financial means to legal representation and essential community resources. Each year, SLA helps over 3,0000 people in our community access the legal system when they would otherwise be shut out. Our small legal team and network of volunteer lawyers provide free legal services for eviction prevention, criminal record expungement, life and estate planning, family law, foreclosure, and consumer debt. These services help families gain financial and housing stability and give people hope and agency over their future.

SLA serves 8 Eastern Shore counties (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester) and has helped hundreds of people on the Eastern Shore to get their records cleared. But we've only scratched the tip of the iceberg – 407,000 Marylanders have records that could be shielded from public view right now. That's hundreds of thousands of Marylanders who could be doing better and earning more. The current process should be simple. But it's not, and that's why only 2% of people who are eligible for record expungement actually file petitions. The forms are confusing and can be rejected for simple mistakes or missing information. For those with eligible records who find their way to us, SLA's attorneys provide the necessary research and document preparation, then file the expungement petitions on our client's behalf. An automated process would relieve the volume of cases we handle, allowing our limited legal staff to focus on the more complex situations.

The people who come to us for record expungement are extraordinary and resilient. Many are under employed, others have invested deeply in education, but then were denied employment due to their past record. One recent client who had experienced homelessness as result of not being able to secure housing described having a transformative moment of hope and elation after obtaining expungement of old records from a life they had long left behind. He's now working at a nursing home where he provides vital care for older adults in his community. This client is representative of so many underemployed Marylanders who have already turned their lives around.

Maryland should be leading the way on criminal justice reform, but instead, our antiquated technology and over reliance on an ineffective petition-based system results in unnecessary barriers to the basic things that people need to thrive – employment and housing. Fourteen states and Washington, DC have already adopted automated record shielding systems. Pennsylvania, one of the first states to automate record shielding, made a smart $3 million investment in technology that will results in sealing a staggering 36 million records. Colorado spent $2.6 million on administrative and technological upgrades to begin the process of shielding 1 million eligible records. Other states with similar judicial records systems have done it with a modest investment of staffing and resources.

The impact is big – national studies show that when people are able to get their records shielded, they see a 22% increase in income. That means better lives for families, more tax revenue, and stronger communities. We ask for your support for SB483 to help Maryland families move forward now. For more information about our position, please feel free to reach out to Meredith Girard, Esq., Executive Director, at: mgirard@shorelegal.org, 410-690-8128.

SB 483 Written Testimony - JPR.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike McKay

Position: FAV

MIKE McKAY
Legislative District 1
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

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Judicial Proceedings Committee

Executive Nominations Committee

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Joint Committees

Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review

Children, Youth, and Families

Program Open Space and Agricultural
Land Preservation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Williamsport, Maryland

Senate Bill 483 – Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

February 17, 2026

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

Senate Bill 483, the Clean Slate Act of 2026, is a commonsense reform that modernizes Maryland's expungement process and ensures the law works as intended for people who have already earned relief. By requiring automated expungement of eligible cases, the bill removes unnecessary procedural barriers that currently prevent thousands of Marylanders from clearing records they are legally entitled to expunge. Automating this process promotes fairness and consistency across jurisdictions, reduces administrative burdens on the courts, and ensures that expungement is not dependent on an individual's ability to navigate a complex legal system or pay filing fees.

Just as importantly, SB 483 strengthens public safety and economic stability by allowing individuals with old, low-level, and nonviolent records to move forward with their lives once sufficient time has passed without reoffending. Clearing eligible records improves access to employment, housing, and education— key factors that reduce recidivism and strengthen communities. The bill preserves appropriate safeguards by excluding serious offenses and requiring significant waiting periods, striking the right balance between accountability and second chances. Senate Bill 483 reflects Maryland's commitment to smart justice policies that are efficient, fair, and focused on long-term community well-being.

I thank you for your time and I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Senator Mike McKay
Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland
Serving Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

MD Senate Judicial Proceedings_Clean Slate_JPMC St

Uploaded by: Nan Gibson

Position: FAV

Statement for the Record
JPMorganChase *Policy*Center
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland General Assembly
February 5, 2025

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement in support of Maryland Clean Slate automatic record clearing, SB 398/HB 545.

One in three Americans – roughly 80 million people – face barriers to employment due to an arrest or conviction record. They represent a Waiting Workforce. JPMorganChase is committed to giving people across the country a second chance. In 2023, JPMorganChase hired more than 3,000 people with criminal records – nearly 10 percent of new hires in the US – whose history had no bearing on the requirements of the job they were seeking. To achieve this type of impact, we made changes in our own hiring and recruitment practices (e.g., we 'banned the box'), and we are actively encouraging other companies to do the same.

As a founding member of the **Second Chance Business Coalition**, JPMorgan Chase is working with more than 50 large companies across multiple industries that are committed to developing best practices and tools for employers to deploy second chance hiring and advancement strategies within their firms. Most of these companies are household names and have a presence in virtually every community across the country.

We believe business has a role to play in helping more people share in the benefits of economic growth. But to achieve systemic change, we need improved public policy, including common sense measures like Clean Slate automatic record clearing for eligible offenses.

In Maryland, it is estimated that more than 400,000 people are eligible to have their records cleared, but very few pursue the complex, time consuming and costly process. This means that even after fulfilling their justice system obligations, people with criminal records often continue to be blocked from fully participating in the economy and their community. To provide relief in the communities we serve, JPMorganChase's Legal Pro Bono team partners with community-based legal services nonprofit organizations and law firm partners to host expungement clinics with the aim of helping eligible individuals prepare the documents needed for the criminal record expungement or sealing process.

JPMorganChase has a presence in all 50 states, and we're always looking to attract top talent and break down barriers to employment. For example, last fall we celebrated the one year anniversary of the firm's Baltimore-based virtual call center by announcing it doubled the employee headcount to 81 specialists and leaders in 12 months. We aim to expand this team to 125 employees, further solidifying our commitment to expand the availability of customer service careers to communities where talent

exists but opportunities have been limited without a traditional call center site. Our new team members are among the more than 575 employees in Maryland serving more than 1.3 million consumer and business customers—and growing – across the state.

By reducing barriers to employment for those with criminal records, Clean Slate legislation can play an important role in getting more talent into the labor market. States such as Pennsylvania, Utah, Michigan, Delaware, Connecticut, New Jersey, Virginia, Colorado, Louisiana, and New York have passed Clean Slate measures to automate the process of clearing or sealing eligible criminal records and open access to career pathways. Pennsylvania has already cleared eligible records for about 1.2 million people and Utah has cleared roughly 500,000 eligible records.

When someone cannot get their foot in the door to compete for a job, it hurts businesses and communities by limiting access to economic opportunity. We urge the legislature to pass Clean Slate legislation to help bolster the state's economy by more fully tapping the talents of thousands of people who are currently unemployed or underemployed because of their past record.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of Clean Slate legislation and urge a favorable report.

Contact:
JPMorganChase PolicyCenter
Nan.M.Gibson@jpmchase.com / 202-320-4545

NCADD-MD - 2026 SB 483 FAV - Clean Slate Act of 20

Uploaded by: Nancy Rosen-Cohen

Position: FAV

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 17, 2026

Senate Bill 483
Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement
Clean Slate Act of 2026

Support

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 483. NCADD-Maryland has long advocated for policies that help people involved with the criminal justice system avoid some of the unintended collateral damage caused by our drug policies. When people who struggle with substance use disorders get treatment and start the recovery process, criminal records are often huge barriers to success. Obtaining employment and housing is difficult, and sometimes impossible. Without a place to live or a reliable income, some people are much more likely to re-offend and/or return to alcohol and drug use.

Since the passage of the Justice Reinvestment Act in 2016, the Maryland General Assembly has made significant strides in expanding the list of eligible charges for criminal record expungement. However, fewer than 10% of individuals who qualify for expungement petition to have their charges expunged, likely due to court staff workload or limited awareness. The proposed legislation automates the petition process and seeks to remove all digital access to the charges.

Senate Bill 483 will automatically expunge eligible convictions from people's records. With the advances in technology in the Judiciary, it seems unreasonable to require people who meet the requirements for expungement to have to file petitions and potentially appear in court to obtain something they have a right to and that can be easily accomplished by the State.

These kinds of policy changes are a necessary component to significantly improving our communities. When people have served their time, they should have the opportunities and supports needed to ensure they are able maintain productive lives and livelihoods with their families. Removing some of the barriers to success will also help people with substance use disorders maintain their recovery.

We urge your support of Senate Bill 483.

2.26_Flagger Force - Clean Slate MD Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Banister

Position: FAV

February 13, 2026

Support– Senate Bill 483 sponsored by Sen. Mike McKay
Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

As the Public Affairs Manager of Flagger Force, I write to you in support of S.B. 483 – known as the Clean Slate Act. This bill has the ability to expand Maryland's workforce, diversify the talent pool, and provide meaningful career opportunities to thousands for whom criminal records pose a barrier to employment.

Flagger Force is a leading traffic control company, providing services throughout the eastern United States. We work to keep our communities moving, not only by directing the flow of traffic for our clients but also through job creation and career development. We believe everyone deserves the dignity of work, and for that reason we strongly support Clean Slate legislation in Maryland. As an employer of justice-impacted individuals, we have witnessed firsthand the impact fair chance employment can have on the lives of individuals, families, communities, and the economy.

Approximately one million people, or 22% of Maryland's adult population, have some form of criminal record. While an estimated 400,000 of those Marylanders are currently eligible to have their records cleared, the existing petition-based system is a bureaucratic maze, leaving our neighbors without the relief and economic opportunities they deserve. The costly, complex, and time-consuming process makes it virtually inaccessible – studies indicate that less than 5% of individuals nationwide go through the available petition processes. Voting for automatic record clearing is a vote to give our communities a fresh start – and a clean slate.

We cannot overstate the effects of fair chance hiring and the access to opportunities it leads to for those with criminal records. Formerly incarcerated individuals face over 40,000 barriers to meaningful re-entry, and formerly incarcerated individuals are unemployed at a rate of over 27%. For a point of reference, the peak unemployment rate during the COVID-19 pandemic was 13%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. With nearly nine in ten employers still using background checks to screen applicants' criminal records, the obstacles associated with an old criminal record can last a lifetime. Once an individual has paid their debt to society, they should be able to rejoin their community freely without their past continuing to create obstacles and roadblocks to a quality life.

Not only would Clean Slate have immediate economic benefits – it would also contribute to public safety. Individuals who had their records cleared are less likely to commit a new offense than the general population. By helping deserving Marylanders rejoin the workforce, Clean Slate will significantly reduce recidivism, making our communities stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

WE KEEP OUR COMMUNITIES MOVING®

Flagger Force is proud to employ 380 Marylanders – including individuals with old criminal records. Working towards a more equitable and inclusive future means giving people a real chance. By doing so, we will undoubtedly strengthen the workforce, the economy, and communities across Maryland. Flagger Force strongly supports S.B. 483, and I urge the Committee to approve this critical legislation.

Contact:
Jamie Arehart
Public Affairs Manager
717-482-8800
Jamie.Arehart@FlaggerForce.com

WE KEEP OUR COMMUNITIES MOVING®

2.26_RBIJ - Clean Slate MD (Written) Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Banister

Position: FAV

February 13, 2026

Re: S.B. 483: Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice (RBIJ) is an award-winning international nonprofit that works with companies to champion solutions that promote public safety, deliver justice, and strengthen communities. Since its inception, RBIJ has collaborated with companies of all sizes across two dozen states to advocate for practical policy reforms that expand workforce opportunities and stimulate economic growth. We strongly support the passage of Clean Slate Maryland (S.B. 483) to provide deserving individuals with the second chance they have earned.

A criminal record creates significant barriers to employment, housing, professional licensing, and education—not just for individuals but also for their families. The challenges in securing employment are particularly severe: nine in ten employers currently use background checks to screen applicants, and having a record – even an extremely old record – reduces an otherwise-qualified job seeker's chance of getting a callback by nearly 50 percent. Those record clearing processes that do exist are complicated, burdensome, and seldom accessed. Nationally, less than five percent of eligible individuals receive the clearance to which they are entitled. The result is costly to businesses and communities alike.

Clean Slate legislation in Maryland would remove these barriers – creating benefits for businesses across the state. Passing automatic record clearing will help employers access a diverse, loyal, and underutilized talent pool to bolster the labor market. According to a recent poll conducted by Small Business Majority, 84% of small business owners agree that Clean Slate policies will open up a pool of applicants that have earned a second chance. This bill would ease the burden for companies that are desperately trying to hire. Clean Slate is an opportunity for job growth that Maryland cannot afford to pass up.

Passage of these bills would significantly strengthen Maryland's economy. Estimates indicate that the underemployment of people with records costs the United States more than $87 billion in lost productivity. A study in Michigan found that automatic record clearing increases wages by more than 20 percent within one year alone. That's more money in the pockets of

The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice is the collective name for RBIJ UK (a non-profit community interest company (company number: 12100724)) and RBIJ USA (a fiscally sponsored project of NEO).

www.responsiblebusinessinitiative.org | info@responsiblebusinessinitiative.org

consumers and back into local businesses. Removing barriers to employment reduces the need for government assistance, saving taxpayer dollars and increasing prosperity.

And if the jobs and economic growth potential isn't reason enough to support Clean Slate, the benefit to public safety is key. One of the most important factors in whether someone will reoffend is their employment status. By expanding the pool of talent businesses can recruit into long-term, sustaining jobs, Clean Slate will reduce recidivism. By making Maryland a safer place to live and work, we can continue to attract new talent, new employers, and new investments.

It's no surprise that Clean Slate policies have garnered support from multinational corporations, mid-sized businesses, small enterprises, and Chambers of Commerce nationwide. Companies have seen firsthand how automatic record clearing strengthens the communities they serve while also benefiting their bottom line. RBIJ stands in strong support of passing Clean Slate. Maryland needs legislation that meets the needs of its workers and its businesses – and S.B. 483 does just that. It is imperative that the legislature take this opportunity to pass this common-sense measure.

Nicole Banister
Director, Policy and Advocacy
Responsible Business Initiative for Justice
nicole@rbij.org

Lilian's Southern Catering - CS MD Written Testimo

Uploaded by: Nicole Banister

Position: FAV

Written Testimony in support of Clean Slate S.B. 483

February 13, 2026

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

As the founder of Lillian's Southern Box Catering and public health professional, my support for the Clean Slate bill is grounded in both national policy leadership and real-world implementation. In 2025, I spoke at the Congressional Black Caucus on workforce access, economic mobility, and second chance hiring—issues that directly align with the intent of Clean Slate. That national platform reinforced what I see daily as a business owner and workforce partner: lingering criminal records create unnecessary barriers to employment, suppress labor force participation, and weaken local economies. Clean Slate is not just a justice reform; it is a proven economic and public safety strategy.

By automating the record clearing process for eligible individuals, these bills would provide critical relief to over 400,000 Marylanders with a record, many of whom are currently struggling to obtain stable employment, food security, housing, education, and more. The necessity of such relief cannot be understated. 1 in every 4.6 adults in Maryland have some form of a criminal record — that means that 22% of our adult population is struggling to obtain meaningful employment. Studies have found that having a criminal record reduces the likelihood of a callback or job offer by nearly 50 percent. Conversely, when people have their records cleared, their wages increase by over 22% within one year. The solution is clear: automating our state's record clearing process would allow hundreds of thousands of Marylanders to return to work and to meaningfully contribute to their local communities and economies.

As a Maryland business owner and public health professional, I see the impacts that having a criminal record can have firsthand. Throughout the entirety of my career to date, I have worked with vulnerable populations struggling with social determinants of health, employment, housing, and food insecurity. For many of the individuals I worked with, having a record — even a decades-old record — posed significant and nearly insurmountable challenges to them and their families. And while our state's current system does provide an expungement process, I heard time and time again that without the help of free expungement clinics with legal experts, it is almost impossible to navigate. In fact, studies estimate that on average, about 90% of eligible individuals never go through the existing record clearing processes because of the costs, complexities and other barriers.

There's a reason why 84% of small business owners support automated record clearing — like me, these business owners understand that Clean Slate policies are good for our communities, businesses, and local economies. In fact, studies indicate that second-chance hires have a lower turnover rate than other employees and their quality of work is on par, if not higher, than their peers.

It is also critical to note the racial disparities within criminal records in our state. 27% of Black adults have some form of a record, while Black people only represent 12.4% of the population. In comparison, 22% of white adults have a record while representing 48.3% of the total population. Studies show that the negative effect of a criminal conviction on employment is substantially larger for Blacks than for whites, estimating that the magnitude of the criminal record penalty suffered by Black applicants (60 percent) is roughly double the size of the penalty for whites with a record (30 percent). Today, the Maryland legislature has a chance to uphold the values of equity and help mitigate these dire disparities by passing Clean Slate.

Clean Slate policies also have a profound impact on women and their children, breaking cycles of economic hardship, reducing recidivism and creating pathways to stability. Because women workers are concentrated in industries that perform more criminal background checks—retail and caregiving—formerly incarcerated women may have still greater challenges in finding employment. I have worked with justice-impacted women across child welfare, housing, employment, and behavioral health and have empowered such women to start their own businesses because of the challenges with obtaining employment. Even with my educational and professional background, there was a time when I faced similar hardships. This lived experience provided me a unique perspective to help these women navigate such challenges and further informs my support of Clean Slate. These policies provide increased access to business funding and resources, access to professional licensure, and opens opportunities for securing partnerships and contracts. By removing barriers associated with criminal records, these policies empower women to start and grow businesses, create jobs and build generational wealth in our state.

Through my business partnerships with Responsible Business Initiatives for Justice (RBIJ), Second Chance Hiring Alliance, and the DC Center for Court Excellence, Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Employment and Development Career Coaching Initiative, University of Baltimore School of Law, DC Department of Employment Services, Washington DC Black Chamber of Commerce and University of Maryland Medical Systems Workforce Development, I have firsthand experience with how record clearance improves employment outcomes, strengthens employer pipelines, and

supports long-term stability for individuals and families. These partnerships demonstrate that when records are cleared, businesses gain access to reliable, motivated workers, and communities benefit from reduced recidivism and increased economic participation. Clean Slate provides the policy infrastructure that allows these outcomes to scale. For these reasons, I strongly support the passage of the Clean Slate bill and urge the committee to advance this critical legislation.

Kenya Jenkins

CEO and Founder of Lilian's Southern Box Catering

Salisbury Area Chamber - CS MD Testimony_2.26.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Banister

Position: FAV

February 13, 2026

Written Testimony in support of Clean Slate

Prepared for William Chambers

President of the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

As the President and CEO of the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, I write to you in support of S.B. 483, known as Clean Slate Maryland. This commonsense bill would provide much-needed relief not only to our fellow Marylanders with eligible criminal records, but also to our employers, workforce, and economy.

The Salisbury Area Chamber represents over 650 companies and organizations throughout the Eastern Shore, including those in agriculture, finance, healthcare, education, hospitality, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and more. Our membership is made up of 80% small businesses, the backbone of our state's economy. Our mission is to serve our members' interests through business advocacy, connections, education, and promoting economic development for the whole region. For that reason, the Salisbury Area Chamber strongly supports the passage of Clean Slate in Maryland.

There are approximately one million adults in Maryland with some form of a criminal record, and many of whom face significant barriers to employment. Meanwhile, employers across the state continue to struggle to fill open positions. An estimated 400,000 Marylanders are already eligible to have their records cleared and will be able to reenter the workforce, allowing our local businesses to tap into an expansive and diverse talent pool. By automating the record clearing process for certain misdemeanors, Clean Slate opens up more opportunities for workers and employers alike.

Providing a clean slate will not only benefit the workforce, but also our overall state economy. Recent studies indicate that underemployment related to imprisonment or conviction reduces people's wages nationwide by as much as $372.3 billion annually. Similarly, it's been estimated that the U.S. loses roughly $87 billion a year due to the underemployment of formerly incarcerated individuals. As we continue to work towards a more prosperous Maryland, it's critical that we help our citizens prosper first. It's time to get our hard-working Marylanders back to work and allow them to contribute their money back into our local businesses and economies.

The Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to represent the interests of hundreds of businesses in southeastern Maryland, and we believe that Clean Slate is an innovative solution to the needs of our business community and beyond. Our fellow Marylanders are in need of stable, sustainable employment and our local businesses are in need of qualified employees. SB 483 presents a unique opportunity for the legislature to clear a path towards a more equitable and prosperous Maryland for all its residents and local businesses.

William Chambers

President

Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce

Eckel FAV SB483_HB360 - Clean Slate Act.pdf
Uploaded by: Rianna Eckel
Position: FAV

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Rianna Eckel, I live in District 43A, and I am a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. I was also arrested when I was 15, and having my charge expunged greatly improved my life. Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore is a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. **I am writing in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so. They may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1]

This has lasting effects. Charges that people could have had expunged may instead remain on their records permanently, which can dramatically impact their lives for the worse. Potential consequences of having a criminal record include being unable to rent an apartment, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of one's children, access some government services, or vote in elections.[2] These avoidable consequences limit people's lives and ability to participate meaningfully in society and contribute to their communities.

SB483 would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the judiciary case search website) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of the person whose case it is filing a request for expungement. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in theory, but in practice for any Marylanders who are eligible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **issue a favorable report on SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rianna Eckel
2300 Hunter St, Baltimore MD 21218
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

SB483_Favorable_OPD.pdf

Uploaded by: Sean Link

Position: FAV

NATASHA DARTIGUE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

KEITH LOTRIDGE
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

HANNIBAL KEMERER
CHIEF OF STAFF

ELIZABETH HILLIARD
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: SB0483 – Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)

FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: February 13, 2026

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on SB 483.

Expungement broadens opportunities for education, employment, professional licensing, and housing, helping individuals reintegrate into society, and ultimately reducing recidivism. It also reduces the systemic barriers that arise from racial disparities in the criminal legal system and perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalization. This bill changes the process of identifying and expunging eligible dispositions. It ensures that individuals are fully benefiting from their existing rights under law, rather than missing out on critical life opportunities based on an old conviction that is ripe for removal. OPD supports this measure to remove confusion and delays from the expungement process and provide eligible defendants with the relief for which they already qualify.

For over a decade, Maryland law has recognized the benefits to individuals and society at large in allowing people to clear the stigma of a criminal disposition off their record. According to the Clean Slate Maryland coalition, at least 407,000 adult residents are eligible under present state law for a full record clearance; however, only 2% of those individuals currently receive expungement relief. Whether due to confusion, red tape, or lack of knowledge about the processes available, this process is falling far short of its intended reach.

OPD clients regularly ask staff and attorneys about eligibility for expungement, often for old convictions with limited public safety implications. Part of their confusion comes from the difficulty in knowing how to initiate or advance an expungement petition without an attorney, even though that process is meant to be available to all. But another major complication is the complexity of the

statutory scheme itself. The current expungement framework in Criminal Procedure Section 10-110 collects nearly 100 designated offenses which have been added piecemeal over the last decade. The result is a long list of offense numbers with limited logical structure. Many low-level misdemeanors and even traffic offense convictions remain ineligible solely because they have not been specifically added to this list, not due to the severity of the offense nor to any specifically-expressed intent to exclude it from expungement eligibility. To name a few confounding examples: reckless driving, keeping a disorderly house, and trespass by refusal to leave private (or public) property are all presently *not* expungable – while a conviction for trespassing on *posted* property *is* presently expungable. These arbitrary designations foster confusion among attorneys and defendants alike, creating an early hurdle against pursuing affirmative relief, despite actual eligibility under law.

The Clean Slate Act takes guesswork and confusion out of the process and instead creates an automated procedure in which the judiciary will identify all dispositions that are newly eligible for expungement each month, report them to the Department of Public Safety, and then both bodies will expunge those dispositions. To be clear, this bill shifts the *method* of expungement without impacting any of the existing *criteria* for eligibility. So, instead of placing the burden on every defendant to study the intricacies of the legal code and formally request the relief they are due, custodians with expert training and knowledge of the state's expungement laws will ensure those laws are carried out as written.

It is particularly noteworthy that SB 483 defines "expunge" in this subsection to mean "remove all references to a specified criminal case" from the relevant systems and from public view, without allowing for obliteration of case records or requiring any redactions of case documents or media. OPD believes that this definition strikes the right balance: it removes the matter from public view – and thus eliminates the risk of a misunderstanding or bias concerning the case or disposition – without destroying records. This method preserves a secure, historical copy, just in case an individual needs later access to their own court records when, for example, a federal agency requires a petitioner to submit a certified disposition as part of an immigration petition, or to correct an unanticipated error in a third-party background check. Due to those exigencies, the agency advocates for amending the state's overall expungement process to more closely mirror SB 483's definition of "expunge" and eliminate issues that obliteration of records causes today. Presently, Section 10-101 of the Criminal Procedure Article defines "expungement" differently – as removal from public inspection by any of 3 possible methods: obliteration, removal to a separate secure area,

or partial access. Unfortunately, after expungement under the current system, individuals are occasionally flagged by third-party background checks or federal law enforcement systems (including immigration databases) as showing "no result" for a case that followed an arrest or filed charge, and creating an incorrect impression that it remains a "pending" matter – rather than accurately deducing that the matter was concluded and expunged, and thus, should not be included in the report at all. Impacted individuals can attempt to correct this error and remove themselves from this frustrating purgatory by obtaining a certified record of the case file from the court – however, this becomes impossible in instances of "obliteration."

As a related protection, OPD also advocates for the General Assembly to explicitly codify a right of action allowing any individual to make a request to courthouse clerks for certified copies of their own court records – whether expunged or not – as a backstop remedy. Permitting this narrow access would help individuals to better understand their own records (and how those records appear to prospective employers or other requesters) and protect residents whose background checks erroneously list matters as pending or as a conviction despite expungement, while still guarding them from broader unauthorized intrusions into their privacy. Courthouse clerks could perform necessary identity confirmations for these requests without burdening petitioners or judges with the present requirements of a separate judicial hearing, "good cause" showing, and court order, simply to receive one's own records. Without those two further updates to the Maryland expungement laws, OPD is concerned that the benefits of this bill will result in unintended complications and drawbacks.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Shifting the burden of expungement off of individuals and onto trained records custodians is sensible policy – it streamlines the process and prevents many thousands of Marylanders from needing to become experts in expungement law to be granted the benefits to which they are already under law. By removing old criminal dispositions as a source of bias, stigma, and assumptions, the commonsense approach proposed in this bill will improve individual lives – clearing barriers to jobs, professional licenses, public assistance, education, and housing – and benefit the broader community – strengthening families, increasing economic productivity, and boosting equity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 483.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.
Authored by: Sean Link, Assistant Public Defender, sean.link@maryland.gov

SB483_HB360 - Clean Slate Act.docx.pdf

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 10**. **I am testifying in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Eligibility for criminal record expungement has expanded since the Maryland General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment and REDEEM Acts. However, an overwhelming majority of individuals who could have their charges expunged never petition the courts to do so. They may be unaware they are eligible for expungement or unable to navigate the process in an overburdened court system. The result is that only a tiny percentage of Marylanders whose convictions are eligible for expungement—less than 10%—actually get their records expunged within 5 years of becoming eligible.[1]

This has lasting effects. Charges that people could have had expunged may instead remain on their records permanently, which can dramatically impact their lives for the worse. Potential consequences of having a criminal record include being unable to rent an apartment, obtain employment or work credentials, gain admission to college or to programs that help pay for college, keep custody of one's children, access some government services, or vote in elections.[2] These avoidable consequences limit people's lives and ability to participate meaningfully in society and contribute to their communities.

SB483 would protect people from the stigma of unexpunged convictions by automating parts of the expungement process. It would require the courts to remove from public view (including the judiciary case search website) all offenses that are eligible for expungement, without the necessity of the person whose case it is filing a request for expungement. This ensures that a "clean slate" is available not just in theory, but in practice for any Marylanders who are eligible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tamara Todd
221 Northway Rd, Reisterstown MD 21136
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev., 119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

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SB483_HB360 - Clean Slate Act_TH.pdf

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It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB483 - the Clean Slate Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Theresa M. Hoffman
803 Seaword Rd., Towson, MD 21286
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

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[1] C. Chien, "America's Paper Prisons: The Second Chance Gap." *Mich. L. Rev.*, *119*(3). https://doi.org/10.36644/mlr.119.3.america Cited in The Clean Slate Initiative Resource Guide for Maryland Journalists, https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/maryland

[2] The People's Law Library of Maryland, "Expungement and Changing Your Criminal Record," https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record; Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, "Expungement" https://www.ma4jr.org/expungement/

MASDP Testimony(written)_SB483_Clean Slate Act_FAV

Uploaded by: Thomas Higdon

Position: FAV

![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

SB 483 - CFUF - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Zachary Alberts

Position: FAV

25 YEARS OF SEEDING LEGACIES FOR THE FUTURE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 483

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

TO: Hon. William Smith, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Zachary Alberts, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Initiatives at the Center for Urban Families

DATE: February 12th, 2026

Good afternoon, my name is Zachary Alberts. I am the Director of Advocacy and Strategic Initiatives at the Center for Urban Families, a workforce and family strengthening program in Baltimore City. We are here to support Senate Bill 483, which will further our goal to remove the barrier a criminal record imposes on our clients' ability to find and retain employment.

At the Center for Urban Families, we help individuals that live in the most underserved, underrepresented, and disconnected areas in Baltimore City. What they also have in common is that they dream of something better and are actively participating in the training, coaching and skills building that will make that dream a reality. 50% of the individuals in our job training programs have a criminal record. This legislation will be a positive step toward ensuring that when they graduate, they are able to immediately begin employment and support themselves, their families, and their community.

We urge a favorable report.

Zach

SB 483 - expungement - auto.pdf

Ivan Bates
President

Kirsten N. Brown
Executive Director

Maryland State's Attorneys' Association
3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 185
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
kbrown@mdsaa.org ~ 301-748-1312

Date: February 13, 2026

Bill Number: SB 483

Position: Unfavorable

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE MARYLAND STATE'S ATTORNEYS' ASSOCIATION IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 483 CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – AUTOMATED EXPUNGEMENT

The Maryland State's Attorney's Association is opposed to Senate Bill 483 – Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement and asks for an unfavorable report. This proposed legislation would create an undue and unworkable burden on the Judiciary and would completely circumvent the expungement statutes as they exist.

Senate Bill 483 attempts to direct the automatic expungement of crimes under both Criminal Procedure Sections 10-105 and 10-110 when the charge is "eligible" and sets a time frame from the time of "disposition" of the charge.

CP Section 10-105 has existed in substantively its' current form for decades and provides for the expungement of non-convictions including Probation Before Judgment (PBJ). Three years are generally required to pass before an expungement can be granted for a PBJ. Although "eligible" the charged person would not be "entitled" to the expungement if the individual was subsequently convicted of another offense or is at the time a defendant in a pending case.

Through the Justice Reinvestment Act in 2016, the General Assembly extended expungement opportunity to guilty findings in a large number of misdemeanors and some felonies. The Legislature set time frames for eligibility from the conclusion of the sentence and despite eligibility, the Legislature also provided the State the opportunity to oppose an expungement an expungement in a particular case would pose a risk to public safety and/or would not be in the interest of justice. The victim is also given an opportunity for input.

Senate Bill 483 eliminates the ability of anyone to assess actual entitlement to expungement beyond eligibility. The Judiciary is not equipped or able to assess whether the individual has subsequently been convicted or is pending charges in this or any other State. If

they could do so, the burden would be oppressive. In addition, there is no provision for the Judiciary to be deciding any issue regarding a risk to public safety or the interests of justice without holding a hearing in each case and hearing from advocates.

Under the current statutory structure, the respective State's Attorney's Office is given the opportunity to look into a request for expungement to determine if the individual should not be granted an expungement. Sometimes that is easy in finding subsequent offenses but also includes an opportunity to look at the individual circumstances of the case. CP 10-110 has a wise requirement that the expungement request be given an assessment "that giving due regard to the nature of the crime, the history and character of the person, and the person's success at rehabilitation, the person is not a risk to public safety" and "that an expungement would be in the interest of justice". There are unquestionably some convictions which would be "eligible" for expungement where expungement would be contrary to public safety or the interest of justice. That is why the Legislature wisely inserted this possibility within the expungement statutes. For example, if circumstances required that the State permit a guilty plea to a misdemeanor eligible for expungement but that the facts of the case were incredibly serious and the public should be entitled to continue to know of the crime. With this proposed legislation, the State and the victim would not be permitted to do anything to attempt to prevent the automatic expungement of the offense.

As disconcerting, the time period for automated expungement runs from the time of "disposition." Disposition is defined to include the time of a guilty plea or guilty finding and is not a reference to the outcome of the sentence. This creates a scenario where cases will be automatically expunged while an individual could be still on probation or still in jail. For example, if an individual was found guilty of a series of misdemeanor thefts and received substantial incarceration with probation and restitution upon release. Seven years after the person was found guilty, all of the offenses would disappear even if the person was still incarcerated and certainly before the probation and restitution could be addressed. This cannot be the intent.

Further, although maybe unusual, there will be circumstances where a criminal defendant may not want their case expunged. Perhaps they are involved in a civil suit or they utilize the existence of their conviction as a demonstration of the ability to reform. This bill would even remove that option.

In summary, this proposed legislation is impossible to carry out, creates very real circumstances where an injustice will occur and completely removes the State and the victims of crime from their rights to properly assert opposition to an expungement when doing so is appropriate.

Expungement of eligible convictions for those who have demonstrated they have changed their lives and will benefit from a clean record to move on with their lives is a worthy aim which the Legislature has already put in place. We ask for an unfavorable report.

Letter in Opposition SB483.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Wilt

Position: UNF

LETTER IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 0483

February 13, 2026

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC) urges an unfavorable vote on SB 483.

Senate Bill 483 will <u>automatically</u> eliminate most criminal disposition records after 7 years, and does so while violating the crime victims' right to be heard and participate.

There is currently a detailed expungement statute in Maryland law, Criminal Procedure Article §10-110. It lists the various crimes for which expungement is available if a court makes findings, at least 5 years after the completion of any sentence and after notice and an opportunity to comment by the State and the crime victim. The expungement must note whether the charged person has paid all monetary restitution that was ordered, is not a risk to public safety, and that expungement is in the interest of justice.

Senate Bill 0483 proposes to do away completely with the court's case-by-case review.

It eliminates the State and crime victim's opportunity to be heard.

It makes expungement from the Central Repository of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services in most instances automatic starting 7 years after the original disposition.

This bill has several serious flaws. First, it would expunge records of offenders who had not yet completed their sentence, either because they were still serving their sentence or if released, had not paid their court ordered restitution. This expungement from the records would also make it more difficult, if not impossible, for crime victims to determine if an offender was still incarcerated. Victims would be deprived of the proof and details necessary to enforce restitution that was ordered and not paid, as provided by Maryland Code, Criminal Procedure Article § 11-616. In addition, the current Maryland law gives crime victims an opportunity to be heard and object before courts act on expungement requests. This bill curtails current victims' statutory rights to be heard on any issue such as unpaid restitution, thus eliminating the ability to receive full restitution before expungement is authorized.

The Supreme Court of Maryland in *Syed v. Lee*, 488 Md. 537, 607-608 (2024) declared that victims' current statutory rights may not be narrowed by the General Assembly but only by a new Constitutional Amendment. The proposed SB 483 clearly curtails the rights given to victims; this action is not permissible under *Syed v. Lee* and Article 47 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights.

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In addition, expunging records automatically, and thereby eliminating from criminal record databases everything more than 7 years old, will adversely affect law enforcement's efforts to assure public safety by investigating and judiciously charging offenders. Law enforcement and prosecution officials will not know if they are dealing with serial offenders who have previously presented a threat to public safety, or with true first offenders. There will also be another adverse effect on criminal prosecutions. Current law allows, in appropriate circumstances, proof of felony convictions that are up to fifteen years old to be used to impeach a witness, Maryland Rule 5-609(b). This bill would effectively reduce that period due to expungement to 7 years, and then eliminate those conviction records, including felony records, altogether, without any case-by-case judicial review for any adverse impact on public safety. Predatory offenders who have repeatedly defrauded Maryland citizens but have not yet been charged, even if that former offender was currently under investigation, would nonetheless automatically have their criminal records expunged. Many occupations (e.g., school bus drivers, bank tellers, child and senior care providers, etc.) involve fiscal responsibility or contact with vulnerable populations. Since individuals can find ways or hire others to invade and alter private electronic databases, official government records of convictions are necessary to allow employers, law enforcement professionals, crime victims, and even neighbors to learn if the individuals they regularly come in contact with have been convicted of fraudulent, dangerous, or violent activities. In addition, recidivism rates during the first decade after the release of many categories of felons approaches fifty percent, which is why current law distinguishes between offenses when setting the various waiting periods governing expungement. Therefore, this "one size fits all" automatic expungement bill will have a deleterious effect on the administration of the criminal law, on employers in many fields of endeavor, and on the fears and protection of neighbors and the general public.

Furthermore, any deletions of any public historical records must be taken with great care and not done in an automatic ongoing wholesale fashion that does not carefully consider on a case-by-case basis if there is a good cause to make an exception to the general rule of preserving historical records. In the case of records showing offenders charged with crimes, accurately preserving history is even more important, due both to public safety and because courts regularly receive challenges to decades-old convictions. Therefore, the current case-by-case approach, supervised by a judge after notice and an opportunity to comment by the State and the crime victim, protects society as well as crime victims.

For all these reasons, the proposed bill should receive an unfavorable vote.

Laura Corbett Wilt, Senior Attorney
And Victor D. Stone, Appellate Division Chief
240-335-4014; vstone@mdcrimevictims.org
Joined by: Joanna Mupanduki, Deputy Director & Kurt Wolfgang, Executive Director

Maryland Chiefs of Police Association
Maryland Sheriffs' Association

<u>MEMORANDUM</u>

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: February 17, 2026

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

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE SB 483.** This bill creates an expungement system that would automatically expunge criminal records once the eligibility criteria are met, without relying on individuals to apply for expungement. While we recognize the bill's goal of helping individuals move forward after past mistakes, the creation of an automatic expungement system raises serious concerns for public safety, particularly as it relates to law enforcement hiring and background review processes.

Police departments and sheriff's offices maintain some of the most intentional, thorough, and demanding hiring standards of any profession. Applicants seeking positions of public trust, authority, and access to sensitive information must undergo extensive screening. Automatic expungement would remove critical information from an applicant's record, making certain prior criminal matters inaccessible to the agency unless voluntarily disclosed by the applicant. This creates an unacceptable gap in the hiring process, where serious past conduct may never come to light.

Given the unique responsibilities of law enforcement officers, it is essential that chiefs and sheriffs have access to the fullest possible picture of an applicant's background and character. While circumstances and rehabilitation can and should be considered, agencies cannot make informed decisions if key details are automatically erased from review.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE SB 483** and urge an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report.

HON. STACY A. MAYER
CIRCUIT COURT
JUDGE
BALTIMORE COUNTY
CHAIR

HON. RICHARD SANDY
CIRCUIT COURT
JUDGE
FREDERICK COUNTY
VICE-CHAIR

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SNR. GOVT. RELATIONS AND
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P: (410)260-1523

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM:	Legislative Committee
	Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
	410-260-1523
RE:	Senate Bill 483
	Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)
DATE:	February 2, 2026
	(2/17)
POSITION:	Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 483. The Judiciary has no position on the policy aims of this legislation and defers to the legislative branch on such matters, but notes issues of concern with operational and fiscal aspects of the bill as drafted.

The legislation's definition of "disposition" differs from the plain meaning of the word as well as the current standard of "completion of sentence." It is unclear if the intent is to allow for an expungement when a court has disposed of a case in a certain way, as presently drafted, or only after an individual has completed a sentence. As currently drafted, "disposition" could include cases in which a plea has been entered but the sentence has not yet been imposed, such as cases in which an individual failed to appear at a deferred sentencing date and a warrant remains outstanding. The current draft could also encompass cases in which a consecutive sentence was imposed and the individual has not yet served that sentence. Expungement in those instances would allow an individual to avoid serving the sentence legally imposed.

This bill would also have a significant operational impact on the Judiciary. The identification of eligible dispositions would require a manual review by the Judiciary and

the statute does not provide a mechanism to make such eligibility determinations. Clerks are also generally unable to make such legal determinations and, as such, it would require judicial review. This would require an individual judicial review in each instance given the multi-step eligibility determination provided in the legislation. Moreover, the identification process for eligible charges will be complex for any case with more than one charge requiring a multi-point verification on eligible cases due to the exceptions listed in Criminal Procedure section 10-105. Another complexity arises with the need for different reports based on the types of charges involved in a case. For example, if a case contains both criminal charges and a Driving Under the Influence (DUI), the DUI is not eligible for 15 years. Programming would need to evaluate if a DUI exists as a related charge, and then make that the "lead" charge for the sake of expungement.

Further, the bill requires court clerks to perform criminal background checks to determine eligibility for expungement. However, current court clerk systems do not have the capability to conduct these background checks, and no provisions or funding are included to develop or acquire such functionality. This gap makes compliance with the bill's requirements impractical under existing technological infrastructure.

Finally, if this legislation is interpreted to apply to historical charges, this legislation would result in a substantial increase in the number of expungements, which would require additional staffing. While the bill would not require these expungements to be completed until July 1, 2028, if this legislation is interpreted to apply to historical changes, there would be a substantial increase in the number of expungements handled in the both the District Court and circuit courts. The Judiciary would have an immediate need for additional staff to begin working on the expungement process of eligible cases to meet the 2028 deadline. The District Court anticipates that a minimum of 12 new positions and 24 new positions in the circuit court would be needed. The estimated cost of the technology and labor will exceed two million dollars ($2,000,000.00).

cc.   Hon. Mike McKay
        Judicial Council
        Legislative Committee
        Kelley O'Connor

SB0483 - LOI - MVA - Criminal Procedure - Automate
Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt
Position: INFO

MDOT
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lieutenant Governor

Kathryn Thomson
Acting Secretary

February 17, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: *Letter of Information – Senate Bill 483 – Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)*

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 483 and offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

SB 483 requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Judiciary to expunge all cases meeting certain criteria on or before July 1, 2028 and newly eligible cases thereafter on a monthly basis.

The MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) maintains driving records that can include notations of convictions for certain offenses. The maintenance and expungement of these driving records are controlled by the Transportation Article, specifically § 12-111 through 12-113, 16-117, 16-117.1, and 16-819 (for commercial drivers), and by the Public Information Act.

Moreover, the record expungement provisions of SB 483 are found in the Criminal Procedure Article, Title 10, Subtitle 1. The scope of that subtitle can be found in § 10-102(a), which provides that "[a] police record or a court record is subject to expungement under this subtitle."

Accordingly, given the scope of Subtitle 1 noted above, and the specific expungement provisions in the Transportation Article applicable to Administration records, the MVA does not view the provisions of Senate Bill 483 as applying to records maintained by the Administration. Thus, MVA records would be unaffected by the passage of SB 483.

However, while it is the position of the MVA that the Criminal Procedure articles do not apply to its records that fall under the Transportation Article, there is further language in § 10-110 which creates a potential point of conflict with earlier definitions and scopes of Title 10 which could be confusing to customers. Specifically, § 10-110 adds "or other record maintained by the State or a political subdivision of the State." SB 483 is written to then include § 21–902 of the Transportation Article within § 10-110. The MVA must maintain appropriate record keeping for drunk driving offenses as a component of its interstate driver's compact and for federal purposes relating to commercial driver's licenses. It is paramount that the MVA be able to appropriately maintain these records to meet such obligations, and SB 483 could potentially establish a conflict in its lack of clarity on scope of records.

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Page Two

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this
information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 483.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer   Matthew Mickler
Administrator   Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration   Maryland Department of Transportation
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2026_02_17 SB 483 Clean Slate Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Tiffany Clark

Position: INFO

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STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

ANTHONY G. BROWN
Attorney General

February 17, 2026

TO: The Honorable Will Smith
     Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Tiffany Clark
     Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: Senate Bill 483 - Criminal Procedure - Automated Expungement (Clean
     Slate Act of 2026) (Support in Concept)

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports in concept **Senate Bill 483 – Criminal Procedure – Automated Expungement (Clean Slate Act of 2026)**. SB 483 establishes an automated expungement system that removes eligible criminal records from public view without requiring individuals to file petitions.

This legislation directly supports our efforts to remove barriers to employment, housing, education, and economic opportunity for Marylanders who have completed their obligations to the justice system. Criminal records create significant obstacles to stable futures for justice-involved individuals and their families, limiting access to employment, housing, public assistance, and family reunification. While Maryland law currently allows petition-based record clearance, many eligible individuals are unaware of their rights or cannot afford the thousands of dollars in legal fees and court costs required to navigate the complex process.

Senate Bill 483 implements an automated system using technology to seal eligible records, ensuring that everyone who qualifies for record-clearing receives relief—regardless of their ability to hire a lawyer or take time off work for court appearances. The bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Judiciary to expunge all eligible cases by July 1, 2028, and establishes monthly automated processing beginning August 1, 2028. Cases become eligible for automatic expungement after 3 years for non-conviction dispositions under § 10-105 and after 7 years for misdemeanor convictions, excluding second-degree assault

This bill letter is a statement of the Office of Attorney General's policy position on the referenced pending legislation.
For a legal or constitutional analysis of the bill, Members of the House and Senate should consult with the Counsel to the
General Assembly, Sandy Brantley. She can be reached at 410-946-5600 or sbrantley@oag.state.md.us.

and domestically related crimes. This approach also reduces the burden on courts from processing individual petitions, preserving valuable judicial resources.

We appreciate the General Assembly's work on this important policy and welcome the opportunity to share our perspective.

Cc: Members of the Committee