

**SB0525\_FAV\_OFJ\_Angelina\_Scarton.pdf**

Uploaded by: Angelina Scarton

Position: FAV



# OUT FOR JUSTICE

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0525:

### Good Cause Expungements

FROM: Angelina Scarton

DATE: February 17, 2026

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

**My name is Angelina Scarton. I am a member of Out for Justice and a resident of District 30 in Anne Arundel County. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 525, Good Cause Expungements,** which allows courts to consider rehabilitation and the full context of a person's life when deciding whether a conviction should be expunged.

I am a mother of two. After a dispute with a landlord, I became the target of retaliatory accusations. In total, 19 charges were filed against me through a District Court Commissioner without evidentiary review. Most were later dropped or dismissed, and I ultimately accepted Probation Before Judgment on one charge to protect my family and move forward. During this period, I lost my business, my housing, and my financial stability, and I spent four months incarcerated pretrial.

Although I was eventually able to expunge my record, the process was extremely difficult. It required navigating a rigid system, filing multiple petitions, and enduring long delays. For many people without legal support or resources, that pathway to relief would be functionally out of reach.

Senate Bill 525 creates a structured and balanced process. It permits a petition five years after a misdemeanor and seven years after a felony, requires a hearing, and authorizes a court to grant expungement on a showing of good cause. Judges must consider rehabilitation, time passed, public safety, and the impact of the conviction on employment and economic stability. This ensures that decisions are individualized and grounded in present reality.

This bill does not erase accountability. It ensures fairness. For people like myself who have worked to rebuild our lives, it provides a meaningful opportunity to be judged on who we are today. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 525.** Thank you.

**SB0525\_FAV\_OFJ.pdf**

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 525:**

**Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Consultant

DATE: February 17th, 2026

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. We strongly support Senate Bill 525, which adds §10-113 to the Criminal Procedure Article to grant district and circuit courts judicial discretion in determining the expungement of convictions, after the completion of the sentence and the standard waiting period.

A criminal record can be both the cause and consequence of poverty and has detrimental effects on the employment prospects for the estimated [1.7 million Marylanders with a criminal history](#) (pg.26). 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, and [one out of three](#) Marylanders returning from incarceration returns to Baltimore City, my jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, Maryland has a variety of laws that, in combination, prevent Marylanders from accessing the expungement services needed to reintegrate into society. First, most charges (~93%) are ineligible for expungement, leaving individuals released from incarceration facing barriers to education, employment, housing, public assistance, occupational licensing, and more. Second, the “Unit Rule,” under [Criminal Procedure §10–107](#) and [Criminal Procedure 10-110 §\(d\)\(3\)](#), prevents the expungement of a charge if the person is not entitled to the expungement of every other charge within the unit, preventing charges that would be eligible for expungement from actually being deleted. Third is the subsequent conviction statute, which bars eligible charges from expungement if a new charge, no matter how minor, is filed during the waiting period for the initial charge. Regardless of how much time has passed since the sentence was completed or how the individual has rehabilitated, they will never have the opportunity to receive expungement relief.

**Senate Bill 525** offers a clear, rational solution to the expungement access problem for millions of returning citizens, expungement lawyers, and judicial officials. It allows courts to grant petitions for expungement of certain convictions *after* the completion of the sentence and the mandated waiting period, consistent with current law. Thus, the courts can use their judicial discretion in determining expungements. This provision already exists in [Criminal Procedure §10–105\(c\) \(9\)](#) but applies only to non-convictions and is rarely used. The criteria for a Good Cause determination in the bill are based on



the nature of the crime, rehabilitation of the person, the risk to public safety, and the impact of the conviction on the person's successful re-entry. Note that the bill only allows a good cause petition **once every three years** per charge, and there is **no** opportunity to appeal to prevent the court from being overwhelmed with new expungement cases.

We trust the courts to levy charges against individuals that will drastically alter their lives for decades. If we trust the court's discretion with life-changing convictions, it stands to reason that we can trust it when granting expungements. For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report of **Senate Bill 525**.

**Colin Willet SB0525.pdf**

Uploaded by: Colin Andrew Willett

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF GOOD CAUSE EXPUNGEMENTS**

**Expungement of Records - Good Cause**

FROM: COLIN WILLET

DATE: 02/13/26

I, Colin Willet support(s) **SB0525** to file a petition for expungement of any misdemeanor or felony conviction a certain period of time after the completion of the sentence, parole, probation, and any other form of mandatory treatment associated with the conviction.

As a young man, I was wrongfully convicted of credit card theft despite the lack of evidence to support the claim. Following the conviction, I was subsequently sentenced to three years of probation. I have been a law abiding citizen with the exception of one subsequent conviction of a DWI. Following the DWI offense, I immediately began sobriety and attended weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. In the decades since, I have worked tirelessly to have a simple life with an honest job. But, my record has blocked me from getting any real employment.

Following the passage of SB432 in 2025, my wrongful credit card theft charges are eligible for expungement. This finally would have allowed my record to be cleared and for my life to move forward. However, current Maryland legislation prohibits expungement if there is a subsequent conviction. My records cannot be expunged because of the DWI. This charge occurred over 20 years ago and does not reflect the man that I am today. I would like a chance to live my life as an honest man, able to work a job without scrutiny.

For these reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on SENATE BILL 525

Thank you, Colin Willet

# **SB525\_HB169 - Good Cause Expungement.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 SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years, in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that reflect who they used to be, not who they are now.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is “good cause” to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to transition successfully back into the community and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to support SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

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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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformational-record-sealing-law-passes/>

# **Senate Bill 525 - Expungement Record Support letter**

Uploaded by: Dr. Carmen Johnson

Position: FAV



**February 17, 2026**

**TO:** Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

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

**Position:** Favorable

Dear President Will Smith and Members of the Judicial Committee:

On behalf of Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT), I write in strong support of Senate Bill 525.

Every year, thousands of Marylanders return home from incarceration only to face permanent barriers to employment, housing, and stability because of a criminal record. With over 1.7 million Marylanders carrying a criminal history and more than 60% of formerly incarcerated individuals unemployed one year after release, expungement reform is not just a legal issue—it is an economic and public safety imperative.

Current law severely restricts access to expungement through the Unit Rule and rigid waiting-period limitations, even when individuals have demonstrated rehabilitation and stability. Senate Bill 525 restores judicial discretion by allowing courts to grant expungement upon a showing of good cause. This common-sense reform empowers judges to evaluate individual circumstances and remove unnecessary barriers to reintegration.

Stable employment and housing reduce recidivism and strengthen families and communities. Access to meaningful second chances is essential for economic mobility and public safety.

For these reasons, Helping Ourselves to Transform respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 525.

Sincerely,

***Dr. Carmen R. Johnson/s/***

Executive Director

Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT)

**SB0525\_HB0169\_FAV\_GuyPowell.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Guy Powell

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 525/ HOUSE BILL 169:**

**Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

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

FROM: Guy Powell

**My name is Guy Powell. I live in District 41 and support SB0525/HB0169 to reduce the impact of incarceration** and enhance employment opportunities for lower-income workers and job seekers throughout the state.

Though my family hails from Glen Burnie, most of my adolescent years were spent in the Baltimore Region. I attended Woodlawn High School, where I found great popularity amongst my classmates, teachers, and colleagues. My cohort deemed me a charismatic, athletic ladies' man, and though I enjoyed the attention, I loathed the constant jealousy I faced from competitors. Competition is expected among young men our age, but unfortunately, the boys in my neighborhood often took it way too far.

When I was 17, spending time with my family at Sorrento's on Route 40 in Baltimore, one of my competitors spotted me and retreated outside. I was not concerned until he returned with 12 of his friends. After a few threats towards myself and my family, I told them they needed to back down or leave. The situation escalated, and this gang attacked us. As they attempted to hold me down and wound me, my reflexes took hold, and I grabbed the nearest item I could to defend myself- which happened to be a knife. I swung the weapon to defend myself cleaving multiple fingers from my attacker's hand and pushing him to retreat. Eventually, his gang left with him, but not in time enough for law enforcement to appear and arrest all of us.

As Maryland has no "Stand Your Ground" law, I was charged with attempted murder and maiming. At my trial, I explained the incident to the judge - who clearly understood my situation and the hostilities that occurred in the community. **I was not given any jail time.** I only received five years of probation and paid restitution to my attacker.

This event occurred 33 years ago, and despite serving no jail time, it remains on my record. Since then, I've become a father of three kids and worked my hardest to ensure they see a better life and not get caught up in the system like I did - even if it was for self-defense. I received a Master's in Social Work from the University of Maryland and currently run my practice specializing in individual, family, couples, and marriage therapy for residents in Baltimore. I have over 18 clients aged 6-60, and the business thrives. It was my way of giving back to the community and doing my part to lessen the trauma that operates virulently in our society.

I am for the Good Cause expungement bill because it would help many people who share my experience—being caught up in some nonsense in their younger years for just trying to survive yet still paying the price today. A record limits employment, education, and housing prospects for millions of Marylanders, and a bill like this is what we need to get more people back to work.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report.

**SB 525 Good Cause Expungment CCJR FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Heather Warnken

Position: FAV



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 525**

### **Good Cause Expungement**

**TO:** Members of the 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 address the harm and inequities caused by the criminal legal system. **The Center supports Senate Bill 525.**

A number of legal obstacles prevent Marylanders from accessing the expungement opportunities needed to successfully reintegrate into society. First, many charges are *not* eligible for expungement, leaving individuals released from incarceration with barriers to education, employment, housing, public assistance, occupational licensing, and much more. Second, the “Unit Rule” prevents the expungement of a charge if the person is not entitled to the expungement of any other charge within the unit.<sup>1</sup> This rule prevents charges that would be eligible for expungement from actually being expunged. Another frequent barrier is the subsequent conviction statute, which bars expungement if a new charge is filed during the waiting period, no matter how minor that charge may be.

Senate Bill 525 authorizes a person to file a petition for expungement of any misdemeanor or felony conviction after the completion of the sentence, parole, probation, and any other form of mandatory treatment associated with the conviction, and an additional waiting period of five years for misdemeanors and seven years for felony convictions. A court may, but is not required to, grant a petition for expungement under the bill on a showing of good cause as defined in the bill.

A good cause provision already exists in Criminal Procedure §10-105 (c)(9) but only applies to non-convictions.<sup>2</sup> Senate Bill 525 will expand good cause expungement opportunities to include certain misdemeanor and felony convictions, allowing for the court’s consideration of the nature of the crime, the person’s history and characters, successful rehabilitation of the individual, risk to public safety, and impact of that conviction on the person’s ability to secure employment, education, housing, economic stability and more.

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<sup>1</sup> See Md. Code Ann., Crim. Proc. § 10-107(b)(1).

<sup>2</sup> See Md. Code Ann., Crim. Proc. § 10-105(c)(9) (applicable to cases that were dismissed, acquitted, nolle prosequi, or resulted in probation before judgment).

## **I. Expanding expungement opportunities through Senate Bill 525 will reduce the substantial collateral consequences associated with having a criminal record.**

A criminal record can be both the cause and consequence of poverty. It has detrimental effects on the employment, housing, and educational prospects for the estimated 25% of working-age Marylanders with a criminal record.<sup>3</sup> Every year, approximately 3500 Marylanders are released from state prisons and struggle to secure a job, find a place to live and reenter society.<sup>4</sup> These consequences compound. For example, of those who are able to obtain jobs, research indicates that in the first few months, formerly incarcerated people earn just 53% of the median U.S. worker's wage.<sup>5</sup>

The impact of an arrest or conviction record on individuals, families and communities is staggering, and an extraordinary number of collateral consequences can follow a justice-involved individual for years, well after a case or period of incarceration concludes. These impacts span numerous areas central to a person's ability to survive and thrive, impeding access to stable housing, education, healthcare, voting, occupational licensing, rights related to the parent-child relationship and more.<sup>6</sup>

Background checks are being used increasingly for non-criminal justice purposes.<sup>7</sup> More than 92% of employers perform background checks for job applicants<sup>8</sup> and deny employment to many returning citizens based on a criminal record. If a potential employer, institution of higher education, department of licensure, or housing provider obtains a fingerprint background check, a person's full record (including non-convictions) within a unit<sup>9</sup> is available to them. Most individuals seeking background checks cannot accurately distinguish between a conviction and a non-conviction—let alone understand the circumstances that led to the charge and conviction in the first place.

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<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2012, 26 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hUGVpw1l6Z\\_GN4KOK6gV1eNkiyYbjbJI/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hUGVpw1l6Z_GN4KOK6gV1eNkiyYbjbJI/view).

<sup>4</sup> Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, *Local Releases from State Custody: Historical Releases by Home County*, available at [https://dpscs.maryland.gov/community\\_releases/DPSCS-Community-Releases.shtml](https://dpscs.maryland.gov/community_releases/DPSCS-Community-Releases.shtml).

<sup>5</sup> New Data on formerly Incarcerated People's employment reveal labor market injustices. Prison Policy Initiative, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2022/02/08/employment/>.

<sup>6</sup> 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.’”)

<sup>7</sup> Becki Goggins, *New Blog Series Takes Closer Look at Findings of SEARCH/BJIS Survey of State Criminal History Information Systems, 2016*, SEARCH (Mar. 29, 2018) (From 2006 to 2016, “the number of fingerprints processed for noncriminal justice purposes increased by 89.6% . . . while the number processed for criminal justice purposes actually decreased by 6.6%.”)

<sup>8</sup> Society for Human Resource Management, *Conducting Background Investigations and Reference Checks*, [https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/toolkits/conducting-background-investigations-reference-checks#:~:ext=A%20survey%20by%20SHRM%20found.cycle%20\(see%20chart%20below\)](https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/toolkits/conducting-background-investigations-reference-checks#:~:ext=A%20survey%20by%20SHRM%20found.cycle%20(see%20chart%20below))

<sup>9</sup> Under current Maryland law [Criminal Procedure §10–107](#), charges that arise from the same incident, transaction, or set of facts are considered a ‘unit of charges’. If a person is not entitled to the expungement of one charge or conviction within a unit, the person is not entitled to the expungement of any other charge within the unit.

Unsurprisingly, expungement recipients exhibit much better employment outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Thus, expanding expungement opportunities is vital for the economic viability of returning citizens *after* they have served their full sentence and completed mandatory supervision.

## **II. The mitigation of collateral consequences does not pose a public safety risk and instead will likely result in public health and safety benefits.**

Expanding relief for individuals who have demonstrated their rehabilitation does not pose a public safety risk; to the contrary, it will promote public safety. An empirical analysis of Michigan's expungement practices found that recipients of expungement posed a lower crime risk than the general population of Michigan as a whole, suggesting there is at least a strong correlation between expungement and lower recidivism.<sup>11</sup> There is no empirical evidence that expungement undermines public safety.<sup>12</sup>

Beyond the absence of a public safety risk, Senate Bill 525 has the potential to affirmatively promote public safety and reduce crime. There is ample research that demonstrates the criminogenic effects associated with the collateral consequences of having a criminal record.<sup>13</sup> It follows that alleviating the burden of these collateral consequences would reduce illegal behavior among expungement recipients and promote the human dignity and meaningful society participation that help people succeed.

The Center fully supports this important bill as part of a broader set of efforts to remove barriers to employment, education, housing, and more for Marylanders with criminal records who have paid their debt to society.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a **favorable report on Senate Bill 525**.

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<sup>10</sup> J.J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, *Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study*, 133 HARV. L. REV. 2460, 2528 (2020).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 2512-14

<sup>12</sup> Sonja B. Starr, "Expungement Reform in Arizona: The Empirical Case for a Clean Slate," 52, Arizona State Law Journal 1059, 1076 (2020).

<sup>13</sup> J.J. Prescott & Sonja B. Starr, The Power of a Clean Slate, <https://www.cato.org/regulation/summer-2020/power-clean-slate>.

# **SB525\_HB169 - Good Cause Expungement.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 SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years, in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that reflect who they used to be, not who they are now.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is “good cause” to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to transition successfully back into the community and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to support SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

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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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformational-record-sealing-law-passes/>

**Good Cause Expungement 13FEB 2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jan Kleinman

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 in Baltimore City. I am a teacher who believes in the potential of each person. If society imposes rules that unnecessarily limit people from fully realizing their potential, we deprive everyone in society of those individuals' good ideas and talents. **I am testifying in support of SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years, in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that reflect who they used to be, not who they are now.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so should it have the discretion to grant an expungement if it finds there is “good cause” to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to, and transitioned successfully back into, the community and the economy strengthens our state. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to support SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

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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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformational-record-sealing-law-passes/>

**SB525 - favorable - John Ford.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Ford

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 a workforce development professional, organizational psychology practitioner, and on my community association board. I am testifying in support of SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years, in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that reflect who they used to be, not who they are now.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is “good cause” to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to transition successfully back into the community, and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to support SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformational-record-sealing-law-passes/>

# **Testimony SB 525 MDDCSAM Expungement-Good Cause FA**

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 525 SUPPORT**

Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 17, 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, 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. 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 cause permanent harm and stigma.**

We urge a favorable report.

(continued . . .)

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](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](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](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 SB525\_Blaha\_SURJ.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katherine Blaha

Position: FAV

Friday, February 13, 2026



## 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 SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions for which they have already paid their debt to society.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are many people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is “good cause” to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformative-record-sealing-law-passes/>

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to transition successfully back into the community and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that I am encouraging you to **support SB525: Good Cause Expungement**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

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

## **2.13 SB 525 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement of**

Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV



**SB 525 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause**  
**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**February 17, 2026**  
**SUPPORT**

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 525. This bill will give the courts more flexibility to grant expungements to returning citizens if the courts deem it appropriate.

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.**

Senate Bill 525 creates a clear and structured pathway for expungement by allowing individuals to petition the court for expungement of certain misdemeanor convictions after five years and certain felony convictions after seven years following the completion of their sentence, parole, or probation. By allowing the court to grant the petition upon a showing of good cause, this bill balances accountability with opportunity.

Even minor convictions can become a barrier for people applying to jobs that pay a living wage and securing safe housing. This impacts a returning citizens ability

SB 525 provides a measured approach. By setting a five- and seven-year waiting period after sentence completion, the bill ensures that individuals have had time to demonstrate rehabilitation. By allowing courts to grant expungement upon a showing of good cause, the bill recognizes that judges are best positioned to evaluate individual circumstances, including the nature of the offense, evidence of rehabilitation, and the impact of the record on employment and housing opportunities.

Expungement is not about erasing accountability. It is about removing lifelong economic penalties after a person has fulfilled their obligations to the justice system. When Marylanders can access stable employment and housing, communities are safer, families are stronger, and the state benefits from increased economic participation.

SB 525 supports economic mobility in three important ways:

1. It establishes reasonable waiting periods, ensuring individuals have demonstrated rehabilitation.

*Creating Assets, Savings and Hope*



2. It restores judicial discretion, allowing courts to evaluate individual circumstances and determine whether expungement serves justice.
3. It reduces structural barriers to work and housing, helping returning citizens re-enter the economy as full participants.

**Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 525.**

*Creating Assets, Savings and Hope*

**SB0525\_BALT\_Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Matt Parsons

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 525**

**Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Matthew Parsons, Esq. on behalf of Baltimore Action Legal Team

My name is Matt Parsons, I am the Community Lawyer at Baltimore Action Legal Team (BALT). I submit this testimony in favor of SB0525. BALT is a legal collective that was founded in response to community calls for legal support during the protests following Freddie Gray's murder. Since 2015 we remain committed to providing legal services to community members which help ameliorate the material harms on individuals and families from systemic racism.

At BALT we work to help people overcome barriers to essential resources that occur from having a criminal record. Much of our work involves pro bono expungements for community members who otherwise lack access to legal relief. Despite popular misconception, the clients who come to us for legal help do not fit the hackneyed trope of what a "criminal" looks like in our society. Media depictions of criminality all-too-often paints a portrait of someone at best beyond help, at worst a menace to society, when our firsthand experience dictates these depictions are as false as they are harmful to us collectively.

BALT's clients primarily entail community members of west Baltimore, though they have much more in common than geography or background: In every instance our clients are people trying zealously to better themselves, their socioeconomic circumstances, and to uplift their loved ones. Our clients are people who are in recovery from substance use, who have made painful calls to families inside central booking, who have served whatever sentence was ostensibly deemed proper for the nature of the offenses committed. Our clients are workers, eager to obtain family-sustaining jobs and provide essential resources for their children, yet simultaneously excluded from a bevy of employment opportunities for which they are otherwise qualified because of their background.

While BALT's expungement clients are told to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" so to speak, whatever inability to do so is not for mere lack of effort. Rather, Maryland's legal and economic systems burden them with the stigma of a criminal record, as if a record ought to supersede all other facets of a human being once a case is adjudicated. Our clients, who are among the hardest-working people our team has ever met, are ironically disqualified from employment opportunities, discouraged after years of struggle to no avail, and ultimately disenfranchised from our communities, our society.

Senate Bill 525 is an opportunity to open the door to relief even slightly wider. This bill is the culmination of years of legislative progress as expungement has become increasingly accessible to impacted peoples in Maryland. Even so, it asks little of the legislature except to provide overseeing judges mere discretion - discretion to weigh the merits of individual expungement petitions; discretion to assess whether an individual has shown a bona fide effort to overcome their circumstances and strive for a greater future.

This bill's simplicity should not belie its benevolent impact on working Marylanders. Many is the time BALT has taken on a client as ambitious and talented as the best of us, only to discover the circumstances



of a single conviction case will preclude them indefinitely from some exciting opportunities of a nursing program, from that security clearance, from that special education teaching position. Such opportunities which, undeniably, advance the health and wealth of our society.

For these reasons, BALT urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 525 from this committee.

**SB 0525- Maryland Legal Aid- Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Meaghan McDermott

Position: FAV



**Senate Bill 0525  
Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause  
In the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Committee Hearing on February 17, 2026  
Position: FAVORABLE**

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its testimony on Senate Bill 0525 in response to a request from Senator Mary Washington.

MLA testifies in support of SB 0525, which would add a good cause exception to the expungement statute. Currently, convictions can be expunged only if they are included in a list contained in the expungement code. A good cause exception allows expungement of charges that are not contained in the list. SB 0525 permits a judge to grant such an exception and would codify a factor-based analysis for the judiciary to consider when granting it. The statutory factors allow the judge to consider not just the petitioner’s offense, but also the changes the person has made since their arrest, and the impact of the conviction on their ability to work, find housing, and otherwise engage in community life.

A good cause exception allows the judiciary to contemplate the spirit of the expungement law, not just the letter. Expungement is meant to be a tool for redemption, but the current statutory scheme is a strict one: a judge may never grant expungement of an unenumerated charge, no matter how minor the offense, or how extenuating the circumstances. MLA clients regularly come to us with a single conviction that has been on their record for decades. These clients are often models of rehabilitation; they work, they have families, they are pillars of their community, but they have that one offense still on their record that limits them from advancing in their careers or moving their families to better housing. Other MLA clients have charges that are analogous to charges that are eligible for expungement under current law, but do not exactly match, and are therefore excluded completely from expungement. For example, trespassing on posted property is eligible for expungement; but trespassing on private property is not. In another example, a client could not have an open container citation expunged, because the law specifies drinking in public as the expungable offense.

SB 0525 institutes guard rails to avoid abuse or overuse of the good cause exception. The bill prohibits appeals and limits a person to one good cause request per conviction every three years. Additionally, the good cause exception mirrors the waiting period contained in the current expungement statute, by requiring that petitioners wait for five years after sentence completion to apply to expunge misdemeanor offenses. The recommended waiting period for felonies is seven years.

**MLA urges a favorable report on SB 0525 to expand access to justice and expungement opportunities for deserving Marylanders.**

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

**SB 525 FAV (good cause).pdf**

Uploaded by: Melissa Rothstein

Position: FAV



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 525**  
**Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Melissa Rothstein, Esq.

DATE: 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 525. SB 525 will provide a good cause exception for expungement of otherwise ineligible convictions.

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.

Maryland law has increasingly recognized the importance and value of expungement availability. Once the sentence has been served, a person convicted of a crime must secure housing and employment, and should have the opportunity to support their family and contribute to their community. Without expungements, these needs and goals are denied after a basic background check that details a person's worst decisions without any recognition of maturation, rehabilitation, and reform.

The current expungement structure creates gaps in eligibility that stymie the intent of the law. Because the statute details what offenses are eligible for expungement (rather than what is excluded), relatively minor charges are sometimes ineligible due to oversight and preclude worthy individuals from clearing their record. Judges who have recognized this problem have

acknowledged that their hands are tied as they cannot grant an expungement beyond what is authorized.

The need for a good cause exception is particularly apparent for people in recovery with a substance use disorder. People who use drugs often sell drugs, and incur distribution charges for low level sales. Once in recovery, those convictions preclude them from receiving professional licenses and certain housing for the rest of their lives.

Good cause consideration for otherwise ineligible convictions allow for judicial discretion in circumstances that warrant exceptional relief. It will not alter the vast majority of eligibility considerations. In the non-conviction context, good cause requires a detailed showing with documentation, which could also be required here.

For the foregoing reasons, Out for Justice urges the committee to issue a favorable report on of SB 0525.

# **SB525 Testimony AMC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michele Kouadio

Position: FAV

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF GOOD CAUSE EXPUNGEMENT:**

### **SB 525: Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: **Michele Kennedy-Kouadio, Vice President of A Mother's Cry**

**I, Michele Kennedy-Kouadio**, support **Good Cause Expungement** to reduce incarceration's impact and enhance employment opportunities for lower-income workers and job seekers throughout the state.

When my son is released whether through a post conviction hearing, Second Look, parole or a mandatory release, he will need barriers to expungement removed or diminished as his livelihood will allow him to support his children and his Maryland community in District 20. I am an aging single parent and will need him to become financially independent upon release.

A criminal record can be both the cause and consequence of poverty and has detrimental effects on the employment prospects for the [1.7 million Marylanders with a criminal history](#) (pg.26). 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. [Over 60 percent of formerly incarcerated persons remain unemployed](#) one year after release. This is mainly because more than 85% of employers conduct background checks on all job applicants and deny employment to many returning citizens because of their records. Thus, access to criminal record expungement is necessary for proper reintegration into society.

Unfortunately, Maryland has a variety of laws that, in combination, prevent Marylanders from accessing the expungement services needed to reintegrate into society. First, **most charges (~93%) are *not* eligible for expungement**, leaving individuals released from incarceration with barriers to education, employment, housing, public assistance, occupational licensing, and much more. Additionally, the [“Unit Rule”](#) prevents the expungement of a charge if the person is not entitled to the expungement of any other charge within the unit. This prevents charges that are eligible for expungement from being expunged. Lastly, suppose an individual receives a parole or probation violation or manages to catch a subsequent conviction during the waiting period. In that case, the original charge becomes impossible to expunge even decades later.

This bill allows the courts to grant a petition for expungement at any time on a showing of good cause. Thus, the courts can use their judicial discretion in determining expungements. This provision already exists in [Criminal Procedure §10–105 \(c9\)](#) but only applies to non-convictions and is rarely used. Michele Kennedy-Kouadio, A Mother's Cry, fully supports any legislation that eliminates barriers to employment for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report.

**NCADD-MD - 2026 SB 525 FAV - Expungement - Good Ca**

Uploaded by: Nancy Rosen-Cohen

Position: FAV



**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**February 17, 2026**

**Senate Bill 525**

**Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause  
Support**

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 525. 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.

Current law states that courts may grant a petition for expungement on a showing of good cause if the charges resulted in a non-conviction, probation before judgment, stet, or the charge was vacated. The proposed legislation seeks to expand the court's good cause expungement power to misdemeanors or felonies that it deems worthy of expungement. This bill simply allows judges to grant a petition for expungement at any time on a showing of good cause. This flexibility will allow judges to make decisions based on individual circumstances.

This kind of policy change is 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 525.

# **ECKEL Fav SB525\_HB169 - Good Cause Expungement.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 SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years, in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that reflect who they used to be, not who they are now.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is “good cause” to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to transition successfully back into the community and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to issue a favorable report on SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

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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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformative-record-sealing-law-passes/>

# **Testimony in support of SB0525 - Criminal Procedur**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0525\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV  
02/17/2026  
Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0525 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0525, **Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause**

This bill recognizes that a criminal record can affect the person's ability to secure employment, education, housing, public assistance, licensing, and opportunities for economic stability.

Expungement: Under Maryland law, there are several ways to "clean up" parts of your criminal record. Expungement is a process that lets you ask the court to remove certain kinds of court and police records from public view.<sup>1</sup>

Removal of that record from public view can mitigate the negative effects of a criminal conviction after a person has completed all the requirements of their sentence and committed no further offenses against the law. This bill sets time limits and considerations that occur when a petition for expungement is made and the disposition and time limits associated with that petition and resulting decision.

The bill authorizes a person to file a petition for expungement of any misdemeanor or felony conviction a certain period of time after the completion of the sentence, parole, probation, and any other form of mandatory treatment associated with the conviction; authorizing a court to grant a petition on a showing of good cause; and providing that a denial of a petition may not be appealed and a subsequent petition may not be filed for a certain period of time.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0525.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.peoples-law.org/expungement-and-changing-your-criminal-record>

**SB525\_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

## POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**BILL: SB0525 – Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: February 13, 2026**

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on SB 525.

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. At its core, this bill allows judges to do what they do best – use their discretion to consider an individual’s specific circumstances and then grant expungement relief if they are persuaded that good cause exists. This backstop measure ensures that no one is barred from relief because of an uncommon disposition or a mere technicality. OPD supports this measure, which provides all defendants with the possibility to move beyond a conviction after they have served their time, proven themselves, and earned relief.

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 charge and conviction off their record. According to 2022 data in a federally-funded study by SEARCH, The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics, over 25% of Maryland adults – nearly 1.7 million people – had some type of arrest or conviction record. However, according to the Clean Slate Maryland coalition, only 407,000 adults are presently eligible for a full record clearance. These numbers highlight that – while the existing system benefits many individuals – it is presently limited by both its rigidity and its complexity. The current expungement framework has been assembled in piecemeal fashion, and it requires specific legislation to name any single offense as eligible for expungement consideration.

That list of eligible offenses in Criminal Procedure Section 10-110 lacks many low-level misdemeanors and even traffic offense convictions, which remain ineligible solely because they have not been specifically added to the 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 (though note that a conviction for trespassing on posted property *is* presently expungable). Besides creating unequal outcomes for similarly-situated offenders by expunging some convictions while leaving others permanently on an individual's record, these arbitrary designations foster confusion among attorneys and defendants alike. The current system both limits the relief available and disincentivizes individuals from even attempting to navigate the process by filing a petition. This bill improves the system by taking the focus off of inflexible statutory designations and placing it instead on the individual, their demonstrated growth, and their need for relief.

Further, Maryland presently allows expungement for only a handful of felony convictions – no matter how much time has passed since the conviction, the individual's intervening growth and achievements, or any particularized needs – such as a bar to employment, professional license, or other assistance and opportunities. To be clear, this bill still mandates that judges give proper consideration to the underlying facts and circumstances of the offense committed and deny petitions where the nature of the crime is incompatible with a good cause finding; however, it avoids slamming the door on any person based on the legislature neglecting to specifically designate the offense. Given the common-sense assumption that felony offenses carry stronger prejudice in public opinion – and thus, that individuals with these convictions would stand to gain exponentially from expungement opportunities – this bill could have life-altering benefits for individuals who have completed their sentence, committed to changing their behavior over an additional period of years, and proven themselves deserving.

While OPD supports SB 525 on its own terms, the agency advocates for amending the state's underlying expungement process to eliminate the issues caused by permitting the “obliteration” of records. Presently, Section 10-101 of the Criminal Procedure Article (which is unaffected by SB 525) defines “expungement” 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 can still be flagged by third-party background checks or federal

law enforcement systems (including immigration databases), listing the case and charges as “no result,” 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.” Until the legislature ends this unintentionally damaging obliteration option, expanding the availability of expungement will also expand the number of individuals who are harmed by having their court records obliterated, rather than simply sealed and removed from public access. Additionally, OPD encourages the legislature 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 backstop protection for residents. This proposal can still protect individuals from unauthorized intrusions into their privacy, without burdening petitioners or judges with the present requirements of a separate judicial hearing, “good cause” showing, and court order to receive one’s own records.

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Allowing a person to expunge their record after they demonstrate “good cause” is a critical update to Maryland’s current expungement laws, which allows our state judges to evaluate each person and their petition on their individual merits, rather than as a datapoint on a confusing and limited list. In addition to improving lives by clearing barriers to jobs, education, and housing, this new opportunity for expungement will also benefit the broader community – strengthening families, increasing economic productivity, and boosting equity by removing a source of bias or assumptions tied to old convictions. It provides a goalpost to inspire those who are re-entering society, as well as a well-deserved reward to those who have earned it.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 525.**

**Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.  
Authored by: Sean Link, Assistant Public Defender, [sean.link@maryland.gov](mailto:sean.link@maryland.gov)**

**SB0525\_FAV\_OFJ\_StevenMcDonald.pdf**

Uploaded by: Steven Mcdonald

Position: FAV



# OUT FOR JUSTICE

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0525:

### **Good Cause Expungements**

FROM: Steven McDonald

DATE: February 17, 2026

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

My name is Steven McDonald. I am a resident of District 28 in Charles County, a member of Out for Justice, and a Master Plumber with Local 5 Plumbers and Gasfitters. I write in strong support of Senate Bill 525, Good Cause Expungements, because it would allow courts to evaluate rehabilitation instead of forcing people to live indefinitely with technical statutory barriers.

When I was 18 years old, after a serious spine injury, I was prescribed OxyContin during a period when addiction risks were not adequately explained. I developed a dependency that led to my only criminal charge related to obtaining a prescription drug. My charge falls under Criminal Law §5–701(d)(4). Although other statutes that criminalize substantially similar conduct, including §5–601 and §8–610, are eligible for expungement or are being added to the expungement list, §5–701(d)(4) is not. The conduct is materially the same, but because of how the statute is labeled, I am categorically excluded from relief. That inconsistency, not public safety, is what keeps my record in place.

I completed my sentence and have now been clean for 10 years. Since my release in 2014, I have rebuilt my life. I graduated from a five year apprenticeship program with Local 5 Plumbers and Gasfitters, obtained multiple licenses, and passed my Master Plumber examination. I am a father and the primary provider for my child. I have invested in my trade, my family, and my community.

Yet my record continues to undermine my professional stability. Over 70 percent of union plumbing work involves government contracts or job sites that require background clearance. Because of my conviction, I am repeatedly laid off or denied placement despite being fully licensed and qualified. I have the credentials, experience, and demand for my skill set. What I lack is equal access. The record creates instability in my income and limits my ability to advance and grow within my field. It is not a question of competence. It is a question of statutory exclusion.

Senate Bill 525 provides a structured path forward. It allows a petition after five years for misdemeanors and seven years for felonies following completion of sentence and supervision, requires a hearing, and permits a court to grant expungement on a showing of good cause. Judges must evaluate the nature of the offense, rehabilitation, time passed, public safety, and the impact on employment and economic stability. That framework restores discretion and aligns relief with demonstrated growth.



This bill does not erase accountability. It restores proportionality. It allows a judge to consider who I am today: a skilled tradesman, a father, and a man who has maintained long term recovery.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 525 so that individuals like me are not permanently defined by a technical statutory distinction rather than our rehabilitation and contribution.

**SB525\_HB169 - Good Cause Expungement TT.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tamara Todd

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 10**. **I am testifying in support of SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years, in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that reflect who they used to be, not who they are now.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is “good cause” to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to transition successfully back into the community and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to support SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

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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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformation-record-sealing-law-passes/>

# Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Tammy Mitchell

Position: FAV

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF GOOD CAUSE EXPUNGEMENT:**

### **Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause**

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

FROM: **Tammy Lynette Mitchell**

### **Tammy Mitchell/Bachelors in mental health with emphasis on addiction**

**Tammy Mitchell** supports **Good Cause Expungement** to reduce incarceration's impact and enhance employment opportunities for lower-income workers and job seekers throughout the state.

A criminal record can be both a cause and a consequence of poverty, creating long-term barriers that affect the 1.7 million Marylanders with a criminal history. Each year, approximately 15,000 individuals are released from Maryland state prisons and face significant challenges securing employment, stable housing, and successfully reintegrating into society. More than 60 percent remain unemployed one year after release. A major reason is that over 85 percent of employers conduct background checks and frequently deny employment to qualified applicants because of past convictions. For many returning citizens, meaningful access to expungement is essential for successful reintegration.

I was released from incarceration in 2017 from the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCI-W) in Jessup. Due to my struggle with addiction, I was placed in the Montgomery County Drug Court Program, which required me to obtain employment, attend NA/AA meetings, and meet other structured conditions. Despite having years of college education and professional skills, I was unable to secure employment commensurate with my qualifications. I received multiple job offers for higher-level positions, but each was rescinded once my background check was completed. Ultimately, I worked as a cashier at Jiffy Lube and as a waitress simply to survive.

My second incarceration at MCI-W occurred in 2009, following convictions for armed robbery, robbery, and related charges. During that time, I committed myself to personal transformation, taking advantage of educational and rehabilitative opportunities and developing a strong spiritual foundation. I have been home since 2017 and have remained law-abiding since 2009. I am now pursuing a bachelor's degree in behavioral health with an emphasis on addiction. However, I was forced to change my original major in social work because my criminal record would prevent me from working in that field.

Unfortunately, Maryland's expungement framework contains multiple barriers that prevent individuals from accessing relief necessary for full reintegration. Approximately 93 percent

of charges are ineligible for expungement, leaving returning citizens with obstacles to education, employment, housing, public benefits, occupational licensing, and more. The “Unit Rule” further restricts relief by prohibiting expungement of an eligible charge if another charge in the same unit is ineligible. Additionally, if an individual incurs a parole or probation violation or a subsequent conviction during the waiting period, the original charge may become permanently ineligible for expungement, even decades later.

This Good Cause bill would allow courts to grant a petition for expungement at any time upon a showing of good cause, enabling judges to exercise appropriate discretion. While a similar provision exists under Criminal Procedure §10–105(c)(9), it currently applies only to non-convictions and is rarely utilized. Tammy Mitchell strongly supports legislation that removes unnecessary barriers to employment and opportunities for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report.

# **SB525\_HB169 - Good Cause Expungement\_TH.pdf**

Uploaded by: Theresa M. Hoffman

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 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 43b. **I am testifying in support of SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**



**Showing Up for Racial Justice**

According to the Legal Aid Justice Center, “Criminal records are more than just files stowed away in a database—they can stand in the way of renting an apartment, securing a job or a work credential, gaining admission to or paying for college, keeping custody of children, leaning on public benefits programs when needed, and voting in elections.”<sup>1</sup> Maryland has moved to broaden the availability of expungement in recent years, in recognition of the fact that all of society benefits when a citizen is rehabilitated from involvement in the criminal justice system and is no longer burdened by the weight of old convictions that reflect who they used to be, not who they are now.

Even under our broader expungement laws, however, there are people still left behind: those whose situations are not encompassed or imagined by the current law, whom the courts have no flexibility to assist. Just as a court has the discretion to hand down a sentence, so they should have the discretion to grant an expungement if they find there is “good cause” to do so.

Not limiting the opportunities of citizens who have paid their debt to transition successfully back into the community and the economy simply makes sense for Maryland. It is for this reason that **I am encouraging you to support SB525: Good Cause Expungement.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

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

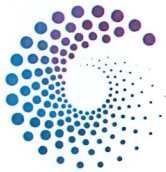
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/news/transformational-record-sealing-law-passes/>

# **MASDP Testimony(written)\_SB525\_Good Cause Expungme**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Request**

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Higdon', written over a horizontal line.

Thomas Higdon  
Executive Director  
Maryland Alliance for Sensible Drug Policy  
[thigdon@masdp.org](mailto:thigdon@masdp.org) | 443-338-0766

**SB 525 - CFUF - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zachary Alberts

Position: FAV

# **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 525: Good Cause Expungement**

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

**FROM: Zachary Alberts, Director of Advocacy at the Center for Urban Families**

**DATE: February 12, 2026**

Chair Smith and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Zach Alberts and I am the Director of Advocacy at the Center for Urban Families. I'm here representing communities most impacted by the limited scope of Maryland's expungement laws and to urge support for good cause expungement.

In Maryland today, there are over 1,000 different charges a person can be convicted of, yet only about 120 of these are eligible for expungement. Many of these ineligible convictions range from such minor offenses as selling a sparkler to someone under the age of 16 to underage drinking. This leaves countless Marylanders permanently branded by their past mistakes without any pathway to a clear record.

Every session that this committee hears testimony on bills that would add specific charges to the expungement statute, inevitably, those hearings inevitably feature impacted individuals asking you to add their particular charge to the statute. This is because our piecemeal approach to expungement fails to wholly address the fundamental purpose of our expungement laws.

This can also be seen in the distinction between distribution and possession with intent to distribute, which reveals the arbitrary distinctions between charges that are expungable and those that are not. Many of these charges stem directly from the failed war on drugs, with "hand-to-hand" transactions resulting in different charges based on circumstance, not actual culpability.

Finally, opponents of this legislation often bring up objections such as "would you expunge a conviction for murder?" Anyone who lives or works in communities most impacted by mass incarceration and centuries of structural racism, sexism, and classism knows a profound truth: some of the best people you'll ever meet are individuals who did something really bad 45 years ago when they were young, and have since transformed themselves into pillars of the community. We should trust the judges who levy the sentences with the power to recognize and reward individuals' rehabilitation and transformation.

We urge a favorable report for SB 525.

# **SB 0525\_HoCoState'sAtty\_ColinCampbell\_Expungemento**

Uploaded by: Colin Campbell

Position: UNF



## SENATE BILL 0525

### **CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – EXPUNGEMENT OF RECORDS – GOOD CAUSE**

### **POSITION: UNFAVORABLE FOR SENATE BILL 0525**

Rich Gibson  
State's Attorney for Howard County

Colin Campbell  
Assistant State's Attorney

### **WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE HOWARD COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 0525 CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – EXPUNGEMENT OF RECORDS – GOOD CAUSE**

FEBRUARY 13, 2026

The Howard County State's Attorney's Office is opposed to Senate Bill 0525 Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause and urges this Committee to issue an unfavorable report.

This legislation is contrary to the purpose of the expungement statutes, and consequently, poses a danger to the public at large and severely limits the use of subsequent offender penalties. Maryland law currently allows for the expungement of many misdemeanors and felony criminal convictions. The expungement statutes are designed to prevent public access to records of arrests, charges, and dispositions when the person is deserving of these protections. However, the General Assembly was careful in deciding which convictions could be expunged and how long an individual would have to wait to file for expungement.

This current legislation gives no consideration to the type of conviction expungement is being sought for, allowing a person convicted of First-Degree Murder, Rape, and even Distribution of Child Pornography to expunge their records within seven years of the completion of their sentence. There are no exceptions within this legislation for convictions marked as Domestically Related, or even Crimes of Violence. A childcare

center or school system will no longer know if an applicant has a prior conviction for Distribution of Child Pornography or Sexual Abuse of a Minor; a nursing home or law enforcement agency will no longer know that an applicant has a prior conviction for Elder Abuse, Rape or even First-Degree Murder.

This legislation would also severely limit the use of subsequent offender penalties, mandatory sentencing minimums, and would alter sentencing through the Maryland State Guidelines. Law Enforcement, Prosecutors, and our Judges will not know the prior history of an individual and thus could no longer tailor sentencing to an individual. Maryland State Guidelines would become unreliable as one of the largest point assessment categories – Prior Adult Criminal Record – would no longer be known. Repeat offenders will not be able to be identified so long as they wait, at most, seven years after completing a sentence. This is clearly not in the best interests of the public and would ultimately pose a danger to Marylanders throughout the State.

An unintended consequence of this legislation would be the legal licensing, carrying, and purchase of firearms by individuals previously convicted of using handguns illegally or any other crime which prohibits a person from possessing a firearm. An individual who is convicted of use of a handgun in a crime of violence would merely have to wait seven years after the completion of their sentence to have that charge expunged, then purchase a handgun from a shop and apply for a carry license, to legally carry another firearm on their person after having already exhibited an inclination to use a firearm for harm. A conviction, which currently would not be eligible for expungement and would be reason for a carry license not to be issued and a handgun sale to be declined.

If the goal of this legislation is to assist individuals with successfully reintegrating into society after their release, there are better mechanisms to accomplish that such as through Shielding or allowing access to expunged records by law enforcement agencies, State's Attorney's Offices, and the Judiciary, but even then the inclusion of all Misdemeanors and Felonies is too broad to ensure public safety.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an **unfavorable report for Senate Bill 0525**.

# **Unfavorable against SB 525.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joanna Mupanduki

Position: UNF



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

☎ 877-VICTIM-1 (877-842-8461)

✉ mail@mdcrimevictims.org

🌐 mdcrimevictims.org

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Upper Marlboro, MD 20774  
301-952-0063 (Phone)  
301-952-2319 (fax)

1 North Charles Street, Suite 700  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410-234-9885 (phone)

February 13, 2026

Re: Unfavorable to SB 525

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC), I respectfully urge an **unfavorable report** on Senate Bill 525.

For more than four decades, MCVRC has walked alongside victims and surviving family members throughout the criminal justice process. We recognize the importance of rehabilitation and second chances. However, SB 525 is a broadly drafted and insufficiently considered expansion of expungement law that fails to adequately account for the rights and interests of crime victims, public safety considerations, and the operational realities of our courts.

### 1. Mandatory Hearings in Every Case

Under §10-113(C), the court “**shall hold a hearing**” upon the filing of a petition. This mandate applies to *any misdemeanor or felony conviction* after five or seven years, respectively. And, the motion can be made multiple times EVERY three years.

This provision will:

- Significantly increase judicial workload statewide
- Require prosecutor participation in each case
- Trigger victim notification obligations
- Require preparation and court appearances by victims who wish to be heard

Unlike limited expungement provisions that apply to enumerated, lower-level offenses, this bill applies broadly to “any misdemeanor” and “any felony,” with no categorical exclusions in the statute.

The cumulative effect will be a substantial and recurring strain on court resources and prosecutorial offices without any fiscal analysis accompanying the proposal.

## **2. Reopening Trauma for Victims**

Although the bill requires courts to consider “the nature of the crime” and “risk to public safety,” it does not expressly require victim input or victim notification procedures within this section.

For victims of violent crime, the mandatory hearing requirement means reliving the offense years later in open court time after time. Even when expungement is ultimately denied, the process itself can retraumatize victims and undermine the finality they believed the justice system had provided.

Victims deserve stability and certainty—not recurring proceedings that revisit painful chapters of their lives.

## **3. “Good Cause” Standard Is Broad and Undefined**

The bill allows expungement on a showing of “good cause,” considering:

- The nature of the crime
- The person’s history and character
- Risk to public safety
- Rehabilitation
- Time elapsed
- Impact on employment and economic stability

While these factors are important, the standard is inherently subjective and expansive. Without clearer statutory guardrails or exclusions for serious offenses, the bill shifts significant discretion to courts in a way that will lead to inconsistent application across jurisdictions.

## **4. Public Safety & Transparency Concerns**

Expungement is not a minor administrative action—it removes public access to criminal records. In cases involving violence, fraud, or crimes against vulnerable populations, expungement may impact:

- Employers conducting background checks
- Licensing boards
- Volunteer organizations

- Nonprofits serving children, elderly individuals, or persons with disabilities, which will include schools, summer camps, and afterschool programs as an example

Maryland is simultaneously considering policies that increase liability exposure for charitable and community organizations based on alleged failures in screening employees. Expanding expungement eligibility for all misdemeanors and felonies, while increasing organizational liability risk, creates conflicting policy pressures. Organizations cannot effectively protect vulnerable populations if access to relevant criminal history is significantly restricted.

## 5. Repetitive Filings Every Three Years

Although §10-113(F) bars appeals and limits refiling to every three years, this still allows recurring petitions over time. Even if denied, defendants may return repeatedly. Each filing restarts the process and the associated burden on courts, prosecutors, and victims.

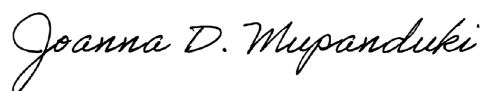
## Conclusion

SB 525 is overly broad, mandates hearings in every case, and does not sufficiently safeguard victim interests or account for systemic costs. Public policy must balance rehabilitation with accountability, victim stability, and public safety. In its current form, SB 525 does not strike that balance.

For these reasons, the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on SB 525.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Maryland's justice system.

Respectfully submitted,



Joanna D. Mupanduki, Esq.  
Deputy Director  
Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc.

**SB 525 - unfavorable - expungement GC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kirsten Brown

Position: UNF

**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](mailto:kbrown@mdsaa.org) ~ 301-748-1312

**Date: February 13, 2026**

**Bill Number: SB 525**

**Position: Unfavorable**

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE MARYLAND STATE'S ATTORNEYS'**  
**ASSOCIATION IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 525**  
**CRIMINAL PROCEDURE - EXPUNGEMENT OF RECORDS – GOOD CAUSE**

The Maryland States Attorneys Association is opposed to Senate bill 525, Criminal Procedure-Expungement of Records – Good Cause and asks for an unfavorable report.

In 2016, the Maryland Legislature embarked on a mission and project which became the Justice Reinvestment Act. Included within this extensive package aimed at addressing the criminal justice system, as it existed, was a major change and expansion of expungement availability for those intent on first paying their debt to society but then intent on making a future for themselves without the constraint of a criminal record. In doing so, however, the Legislature was cognizant of and created statutes which still required some accountability and protection of society. This Bill will take us beyond consideration for some accountability and provide little ability to protect society from those who choose to repeatedly commit offenses. In 2023 the General Assembly lowered the waiting period even more than previously established.

Senate Bill 525 would effectively remove all of the substantive portions of the expungement statutes. It is not an effort to amend Criminal Procedure §10-110 and is instead a proposal to create a whole new statute. That new statute appears to create the right to the expungement of any misdemeanor after five years and any felony after seven years from the completion of the sentence. All that the petitioner is required to do is convince a Judge that there is good cause to do so with consideration of the factors listed at subsection E of the newly created statute. The bill would require a hearing for every petition filed. There is nothing addressing the ability of the State to participate in the process and there is nothing granting any input or rights to the victims in this process.

This Bill as amended would appear to grant the ability to a person to expunge absolutely any crime of which they have been convicted simply upon the very generic phrase of “good

cause.” A person convicted of First Degree Murder, Rape, Sexual Abuse of a Minor, Distribution of Child Pornography, Armed Carjacking and so many more outrageous crimes will be able to ask to expunge their record within seven years of the completion of their sentence. This is unquestionably not what the public wants and clearly will pose a great danger to the citizens of this State.

In the Justice Reinvestment Act in 2016, the General Assembly extensively changed the criminal justice system with an eye to restorative justice including an aim to continue to protect the public by still requiring accountability for the actions of those who commit crime. Within that structure, the General Assembly greatly expanded expungement opportunities by allowing expungement of guilty findings for a long list of crimes including some felonies. This was done by looking at and determining which crimes could be acceptable for expungement if factors similar to those in the amended bill were met. There was also a time frame established when eligibility for expungement would start for those crimes. In 2023, through the Redeem Act, the General Assembly elected to lower the time frames after assessing the appropriateness of doing so. Also, there have been a small number of crimes which were added to the original list of eligible crimes. This Bill would be a radical departure from those efforts and would totally remove the purpose and use of §§10-105 and 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article. This Bill does not even prohibit expungement if the person chose to commit more crimes after the conviction requested to be expunged.

The public may be unable to know that a person previously convicted of Murder lives next door. A Day Care Center may not know about the Sexual Abuse of a Minor conviction of a job applicant. The purpose of the Sex Offender Registry could be gutted. The Judges will be deprived of knowledge of the prior serious record of an offender if that person chooses to kill, rape or rob another if they manage to expunge their prior violent conviction after they have finished their sentence.

With this Bill, every crime ever committed in the State of Maryland is eligible for expungement. It is impossible to argue that there will not be a flood of petitions with passage of this bill which will continue at incredibly high volume in perpetuity. With a hearing before a Judge being required for every request this would overwhelm the Judiciary and create a huge fiscal note. The cost for the Agencies involved in the expungement process would also be very large.

Senate Bill 525 would be a disaster for the community and endanger the lives and safety of the citizens of this State. We urge an unfavorable report.

# **Letter in Opposition SB 525.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Wilt

Position: UNF



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

☎ 877-VICTIM-1 (877-842-8461) ✉ [mail@mdcrimevictims.org](mailto:mail@mdcrimevictims.org) 🌐 [mdcrimevictims.org](http://mdcrimevictims.org)

## LETTER IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 525

February 13, 2026

### Headquarters

1001 Prince George's Boulevard  
Suite 750  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774  
301-952-0063  
877-842-8461 (toll free)  
240-929-0526 (fax)

### Baltimore

1 North Charles Street  
Suite 700  
Baltimore, MD 21201

### Carroll, Howard, & Baltimore Counties

Oakland Manor  
5430 Vantage Point Road  
Columbia, MD 21044  
240-335-4032

### Eastern Shore

240-335-4012

### Frederick & Montgomery Counties

240-335-4021

### Southern Maryland

301-952-0063

### Western Maryland

59 Prospect Square  
Suite 6  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
240-335-4013

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC) urges an unfavorable vote on SB 525.

Senate Bill 525 proposes to liberalize the expungement of misdemeanor and felony convictions after as little as 7 years.

There is currently a detailed expungement statute in Maryland law, Criminal Procedure Article §10-110. It lists the crimes for which expungement is available and has a sliding scale waiting period of between 3 and 15 years depending upon the type of conviction at issue. The statute also provides for notice and an opportunity to be heard by the State and the crime victim. The current bill does not provide for the crime victim or the State to get notice or an opportunity to be heard. For that reason alone, this bill, narrowing victims' rights, is unconstitutional. As the Maryland Supreme Court explained in *Syed v. Lee*, 488 Md. 537, 607-608 (2024), victims' current statutory protections such as these cannot lawfully be overridden by the General Assembly without a new constitutional amendment.

In addition, whatever the merits of liberalizing expungement of misdemeanor convictions, often past misdemeanor convictions are important because they are required for the State to know whether subsequent offenses provisions of the law are appropriate, there is much less reason to liberalize the expungement of felony convictions. Many jobs involve fiscal responsibility or contact with vulnerable populations. Since individuals today can find ways or hire others to alter private electronic databases, official government records of convictions are necessary to allow employers, law enforcement professionals, and even neighbors to learn if the individuals they are in contact with have been convicted of fraudulent, dangerous, or violent activities. Courts allow proof of felony convictions that are fifteen years old be used to impeach under Maryland Rule 5-609(b), but this bill would effectively reduce that period to as little as 7 years, and then eliminate those conviction records, including felony records. Recidivism rates during the fifteen year period after the release of felons in many categories of crime approaches fifty percent, which is why current law distinguishes between offenses when setting the rules governing expungement. Therefore, this "one size fits all" waiting period for expungement 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.

As noted above, this bill does not require either service of the petition or an opportunity to respond for the State or the crime victim. Since this is an “alteration of the conviction”, current law in Criminal Procedure Article §11-403 needs to be honored, and victims must be provided notice and given an opportunity to be heard prior to any court action on the petition. Explicit language in this regard like that which exists in current law needs to be added to any bill regarding expungement.

Furthermore, where crime victims have been injured by felons, including by those offenders whose plea bargains led to reduced charges, the bill should state that there is a strong societal presumption against granting expungement which must be overcome by the petitioner in order to comply with the victims' rights amendment to the Maryland Declaration of Rights, Article 47.

We ask you to give SB 525 an unfavorable report.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Corbett Wilt'.

Laura Corbett Wilt, Senior Attorney

& Victor D. Stone, Appellate Division Chief

240-335-4014; [vstone@mdcrimevictims.org](mailto:vstone@mdcrimevictims.org)

Joined by: Joanna Mupanduki, Deputy Director & Kurt Wolfgang, Executive Director

# **MCPA-MSA SB 525 - Expungement of Records Good Caus**

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: UNF



# Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

## Maryland Sheriffs' Association



### MEMORANDUM

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 525 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE SB 525**. This bill would authorize individuals to petition a court to have any misdemeanor conviction expunged five years after completion of all sentencing requirements and any felony conviction expunged after seven years, subject only to a broad “good cause” finding. The statutory criteria for “good cause” include subjective and open-ended factors such as rehabilitation, nature of the crime, and impact on employment, without clear guidance on how these standards should be applied.

SB 525 creates a path to expungement that is broader and less structured than current law, which historically has built in meaningful limitations on the types of convictions that can be cleared and the interests that should be balanced. Expanding expungement eligibility in this manner undermines the integrity and usefulness of criminal records that are vital to public safety, law enforcement screening, and community protection. The ambiguity of “good cause” invites inconsistent application across jurisdictions, placing an undue burden on courts and potentially minimizing the seriousness of past criminal conduct.

Further, law enforcement agencies depend on complete and accurate criminal history information for investigations, background screenings, and risk assessments. Removing convictions from public records, even after the passage of time, compromises the ability of chiefs and sheriffs to fully assess an individual’s history when making decisions about hiring, grant funding, interagency cooperation, and public safety initiatives. A court’s discretionary determination of good cause based on subjective criteria does not ensure that all relevant risks or patterns of behavior are appropriately considered before critical record information is erased. Expungement policy must strike a careful balance between reintegration of individuals into society and the legitimate, ongoing needs of public safety entities to have full access to relevant criminal history

532 Baltimore Boulevard, Suite 308  
Westminster, Maryland 21157  
667-314-3216 / 667-314-3236

information. For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE SB 525** and urge an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

532 Baltimore Boulevard, Suite 308  
Westminster, Maryland 21157  
667-314-3216 / 667-314-3236

# **SB0525 - LOI - MVA - Criminal Procedure - Expungem**

Uploaded by: Matt Mickler

Position: INFO

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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 525 – Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause***

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 525 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 525 allows an individual to file for expungement of any misdemeanor or felony conviction after a certain period and certain conditions are met. It allows an individual to file a subsequent petition for expungement within three years if their petition is rejected.

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 525 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 525 as applying to records maintained by the Administration. Thus, MVA records would be unaffected by the passage of SB 525.

However, while it is the position of the MVA that the Criminal Procedure article does 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 525 is written broadly such that it would potentially 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

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Page Two

obligations, and SB 525 could potentially establish a conflict in its lack of clarity on scope of records.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 525.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer  
Administrator  
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration  
410-787-7830

Matthew Mickler  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090

**2026\_02\_17 SB 525 Good Cause Expungement.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tiffany Clark

Position: INFO

**CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI**  
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*Chief of Staff*

**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 525 - Criminal Procedure - Expungement of Records - Good Cause (Support in Concept)

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports in concept Senate Bill 525 – Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause. Senate Bill 525 authorizes individuals to petition for expungement of any misdemeanor or felony conviction based on a showing of good cause after completing their sentence, with waiting periods of five years for misdemeanors and seven years for felonies.

This legislation directly supports our efforts to remove barriers to employment, housing, education, and economic stability for justice-involved individuals who have demonstrated rehabilitation. Criminal records create significant obstacles that prevent Marylanders from accessing resources necessary for stable futures for themselves and their families. Senate Bill 525 establishes a structured framework that balances public safety considerations with second chances, requiring courts to evaluate six factors including the nature of the crime, the person's history and character, risk to public safety, rehabilitation success, time since conviction, and the impact on employment and housing opportunities. By allowing courts to grant expungement petitions on a showing of good cause after appropriate waiting periods, this legislation provides a meaningful pathway for individuals who have completed their sentences and demonstrated positive change to move forward without the lifelong burden of a criminal record.

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

**sb525.pdf**

Uploaded by: Will Vormelker

Position: INFO

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

HON. RICHARD SANDY  
CIRCUIT COURT  
JUDGE  
FREDERICK COUNTY  
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## MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**FROM:** Legislative Committee  
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.  
410-260-1523  
**RE:** Senate Bill 525  
Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Records – Good Cause  
**DATE:** February 11, 2026  
(1/17)

### INFORMATIONAL COMMENT PAPER

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The Judiciary respects the separation of powers doctrine and acknowledges the policy-making authority of the legislative branch. As such, the Judiciary has no position on the policy aims of this legislation.

The Judiciary notes four areas for the Committee's consideration of possible amendment. First, on page 2, line 6, the bill provides that "a petition under this section shall be filed in the court in which the proceeding began." We would request that "proceeding began" be stricken and substituted for "conviction was entered." Cases that begin in district court may subsequently be forwarded to circuit court by way of a jury trial prayer or indictment. The petition should be filed in the court in which the conviction occurred to effectuate the requested relief.

Second, the Judiciary would request that the mandatory hearing be afforded only for petitioners meeting the statutory eligibility criteria. As currently drafted, the court must hold a hearing even if the petitioner is ineligible under the bill. Citizens are disappointed, and inconvenienced, to learn at a hearing that the court lacks the legal authority to grant

the requested relief. The Judiciary would request that, at the beginning of line 8, on page 2, “If a person meets the eligibility requirements of (a)(1) or (a)(2),” be inserted.

Further, the Judiciary notes that the language in §10-113 (f)(2) does not distinguish between substantive and procedural denials. It is not uncommon for persons to file petitions for expungement just before the eligibility window, expecting the hearing to be scheduled beyond the eligibility window. As currently drafted, the court would have to deny those petitions, forestalling that petitioner from refile for three years. The Committee may wish to consider language allowing early filers, who would have their petitions denied on procedural grounds, leave to refile if the denial is solely based on failing to meet the eligibility requirements of (a)(1) or (a)(2).

Finally, this bill authorizes a person to file a petition for expungement of any misdemeanor conviction not earlier than 5 years, and any felony conviction not earlier than 7 years, after the completion of the sentence, parole, probation, and any other form of mandatory treatment associated with the conviction for which the expungement is being requested. In those cases which contain both a misdemeanor conviction and felony conviction, the language will require the court to partially expunge records and then fully expunge at a later date. This would require manual intervention, cause repetitive filings, and the expenditure of more significant judicial resources. It is requested that the Committee add language to the bill that indicates, in cases which contain both misdemeanor and felony convictions, the timeframe for filing the expungement is controlled by the timeframe of the felony conviction.

cc. Hon. Mary Washington  
Judicial Council  
Legislative Committee  
Kelley O’Connor