



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 819

Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law

DATE: February 27, 2026

The University of Baltimore School of Law's Center for Criminal Justice Reform ("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 strongly supports House Bill 819.**

For many years, policymakers, advocates, directly impacted communities and others have worked hard to tackle critical issues of efficiency, equity, and public safety surrounding the expungement process in Maryland. Often out of necessity this work has been done in a piecemeal fashion, one issue, challenge, or charge at a time. **House Bill 819 seeks to move the state forward with a more holistic and strategic approach.** It establishes a Commission to review the state's expungement statute in its entirety, alongside other relevant developments in research, law and policy, impacting these important issues in the country and state.

Much has shifted in the decade since Maryland passed the Justice Reinvestment Act, including the growing recognition and documentation of the myriad ways that thousands of collateral consequences of a conviction follow individuals in perpetuity after their sentence is fully served, impeding access to stable housing, employment, professional licensing and more. As a result, every year lawmakers and impacted constituents have returned to this legislature seeking to add eligible charges to the statute, remove barriers, expand access, or otherwise address critical components of this process. There are at least six bills seeking to again amend the expungement statute before this Committee in this year's legislative session alone.

If established, this Commission would bring a more coordinated, collaborative and strategic examination of this body of law and its impact on Maryland communities as a whole. The Commission's membership is intentionally diverse and inclusive of a range of critical perspectives needed to address oversights in eligibility, and to ensure a process that advances and protects public safety. The Commission will also provide the opportunity to review the growing body of research in this area to inform a more equitable and effective approach, based on needed data analysis and lessons learned in other states.

For these reasons, the Center urges a favorable report on House Bill 819.