

My name is Derek Liggins and I am writing to support House Bill 819, Commission to Examine the Expungement Laws of Maryland.

The laws around expungement are one of the main causes of the lack of growth in the black community. With a favorable vote on this bill, it will change lives and remove some of the barriers that impact returning citizens so they can be successful if we truly believe in rehabilitation.

I'm a returning citizen living in Baltimore City's 45th district. My conviction was in 1994. Since then, I've become a homeowner and I have been employed with the same mechanical engineering company for the past 15 years.

In 1987, while I was working at a factory in Baltimore manufacturing train parts, I had to walk home through Hampden, which in the late 80s was notorious for being dangerous for black people to walk through. As you may know if you are from Baltimore, Hampden was the home of the Ku Klux Klan in Baltimore for over a century. To protect myself, I carried an icepick in case I was attacked by a group of individuals. Hampden is also famous because one year after my incident, one of the first Black families who moved in received bomb threats and had their house vandalized.

As I was walking home, a police officer stopped me because I was a black man walking through a white neighborhood after midnight, and when he searched me found the weapon I was carrying for self-defense.

I was convicted of having a deadly weapon with the intent to injure, a misdemeanor. I have no other convictions for violent crime. I will also note that this may be classified as a crime of violence, because it is weapons related, but no one was attacked or injured. I was simply carrying a weapon to protect myself.

My record has directly affected my income. As my company takes on more government contracts, I can't work those government contracts because of the current expungement laws.

With the scale wage that's paid on these contracts I could make an extra \$20,000 per year. This bill could make a difference in my life, my family's life and people like me. I'm asking for a favorable vote on this bill.