

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

This testimony is being submitted in collaboration with Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore and Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46**. I am a workforce development professional, organizational psychology practitioner, community association board member, and proud resident of Baltimore City. **I am testifying in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Imagine there are two people, J and K. J has a bag full of drugs and plans to sell them. J's hands are full, and they ask K to take a portion out and hand it to a customer. Both J and K can be charged with drug offenses. Both are charged and convicted, and both complete their sentence. As the law currently stands, J's crime – possession of controlled substances with the intent to distribute – is eligible for expungement. However, K's crime - distribution of controlled dangerous substances - is not eligible for expungement. These two crimes carry the same maximum penalty, and law enforcement considers both crimes to be “drug-dealing” offenses. This bill would level the playing field by making distribution expungeable under the same conditions that possession with intent to distribute is. J and K, convicted of nearly the same crime, should be eligible for expungement to the same degree.

Expungement can be life-altering, and it is also rare. Only 9% of crimes are eligible for expungement. This bill would not change the fact that distribution of drugs is still a crime. Once a person is convicted of drug distribution, they will still have to serve their complete sentence. This bill would not change the penalties. What the bill would do is ensure that a person who has completed their sentence for this particular crime will not have to continue suffering undue consequences for the remainder of their life. Without expungement, a person who was convicted of drug distribution will always have that conviction on their criminal record. They cannot access housing, job interviews, financial credit, or occupational licensing in many circumstances. If expungement were available to that person, however, what would distinguish them from other job candidates or housing applicants would be their own hard work and evidence of sound character—not an old conviction for which they have already completed their sentence.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0824 Criminal Procedure - Expungement - Conviction of Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substance.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

**John Preston Ford**

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