

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.