



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

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

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February 27, 2026

Re: Unfavorable to HB 819

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC), I respectfully urge an **unfavorable report on House Bill 819, if it remains as currently drafted.**

MCVRC recognizes the desire to review the expungement laws in Maryland, and how untenable the piecemeal legislation is on this issue. With nine bills related to the issue pending in front of the Judiciary Committee on March 3rd alone, the desire for review of expungement laws is obvious. The following are the changes MCVRC sees as critical to having a productive, balanced Commission that will benefit all Marylanders, not just those with criminal records:

1. Purpose of the Commission

The proposed language should be amended as underlined:

(f) The Commission shall:

(1) examine the expungement laws of Maryland and the current expungement process under Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the Criminal Procedure Article for issues of efficiency and equity;

(2) review comparable states' expungement laws and their processes;

and (3) develop an alternate statutory scheme that provides a streamlined process **that protects community safety** and **allows for** broader eligibility **if and as found appropriate.**

2. Membership on the Commission

Although the bill reads on its face to include a broad range of participants on the Commission, the overall composition of its members remains inappropriate. The current make up includes:

- 6 members who advocate on behalf of individuals with criminal records.
- Only one member of a crime victims' advocacy group that is not also required to work with those who are specifically "criminalized survivors of violence."
- Only two public safety members (president of the MSAA and Secretary of PSCS).
- For the elected members- they are appointed by their President or Speaker, therefore not including any requirement for both Democrat and Republican members.

In summary there are 16 members of the commission, out of the 12 members who are not Senators or Delegates, at least half of them are advocating for one viewpoint, and the view of public safety is left to only three members. If this was a balanced look at expungement, it would include an equal number of victim advocates who work solely on behalf of those victimized by crime.

In order for this Commission to produce practical laws that can be implemented efficiently and safely, this Commission needs to include:

- a member from the Administrative Office of the Courts
- a member from the DPSCS or law enforcement community who manages the expungement requests
- a member who has experience hiring employees into private financial or banking positions
- a member who has experience hiring employees for private companies working with sensitive populations (in home care, juvenile or senior centers, etc.)

3. 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

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

Conclusion

While the creation of a Commission is a sound idea, HB 819 in its current form will lead to biased outcomes that perpetuate the division and gridlock we are already seeing. The proposed membership is heavily weighted toward advocates for individuals with criminal records, with only token representation of opposing viewpoints. Such imbalance silences dissenting voices and prevents meaningful dialogue. As written, the Commission is structured to dismiss perspectives that do not align with its dominant position.

For these reasons, the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on HB 819.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Corbett Wilt, Senior Attorney
Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc.