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Judiciary Committee

100 Taylor Office House Building

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HB0187 – Criminal Procedure - Expungement - No Finding and Case Terminated Without Finding

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Lauren Pruitt, and I am the Legal Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ Marylanders from diverse backgrounds. I am writing in support of **HB0187**, which would authorize the expungement of a disposition in a case disposed of by the court with no finding designation or designated as terminated without finding by the court.

HB0187 addresses a critical gap in Maryland's current expungement eligibility. While progress has been made in expungement reform, many Marylanders continue to face significant obstacles to accessing stable employment, housing, and educational opportunities. These barriers further exacerbate disparities affecting marginalized communities, especially the LGBTQ+ community, which already faces disproportionate levels of poverty, employment discrimination, and over-policing.

Expungement reform broadly would:

- **Advance Equity in the Legal System:** By expanding access to expungement, the criminal justice system takes another step toward ensuring certain offenses do not result in long-lasting punishment and lack of access to opportunity.

At FreeState Justice, we envision a Maryland where LGBTQ+ people live openly with the dignity they deserve. Facing discrimination shouldn't keep anyone from being themselves. Through pro bono legal services, policy advocacy, resource connections, and community support, FreeState works to break down those barriers so all Marylanders can thrive.

- **Promote Economic Mobility:** Conviction records severely inhibit access to employment opportunities. By allowing for the removal of certain records, this reform expands access to job opportunities, stable employment, and upward mobility while also supporting the broader Maryland economy.

I strongly urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB0187**. Expanding eligibility for expungement reaffirms Maryland's commitment to a more equitable legal system that encourages rehabilitation and reintegration.

Sincerely,

Lauren Pruitt
Legal Director
FreeState Justice